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ON COLLECTING JAPANESE COLOUR-PRINTS

Hana-ogi of Ogi-ya with two *kamuro* and a friend on the *engawa* of a house decorated for the New Year; *signed* Choyensai Yeishin.

[*Frontispiece.*

On Collecting Japanese Colour-Prints

Being an Introduction to the Study and Collection of the Colour-prints of the Ukiyoye School of Japan. Illustrated by Examples from the Author's Collection

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By BASIL STEWART

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD & COMPANY
1917

Printed in Great Britain

66464

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PREFACE

THIS volume is not put forth as in any sense a finished history of Japanese colour-prints and their artists, but is written mainly to assist the amateur who is starting a collection for the first time, or the person who, while not actually a collector, is sufficiently interested to read about the subject, yet finds the more exhaustive and advanced works thereon somewhat beyond him.

The number of students and collectors of old Japanese colour-prints is ever increasing as more people come under the influence of their charm and beauty, and as they become more widely appreciated. How to distinguish forgeries and imitations ; what prices should be given ; what examples can still be obtained, are some of the questions which the writer has attempted to answer.

Judging from the large number of modern reproductions put upon the market by Japanese publishers to meet the growing taste for Japanese prints, the collector who is venturing for the first

time into this field needs some such guidance as is herein given. From the writer's experience, books on this subject appear to be written purely from the historical or artistic point of view, interesting enough for the mature collector, but of little consolation to the beginner who has inadvertently bought a modern reproduction of, say, a print by Utamaro, or Hokusai; while little is said of the subjects portrayed, a study of which makes print-collecting doubly interesting.

In the first rush of enthusiasm, the beginner is liable to collect any and every Japanese print he comes across or is offered him; generally prints by Kunisada and his innumerable followers which, by their crude and glaring colours and grotesque figures, may catch the eye, but warp the judgment as to what really constitute the famous colour-prints of Japan.

Acquaintance with Kiyonaga, Utamaro, Yeishi, Hokusai, and Hiroshige, and other artists in the front rank, will for ever suppress any desire which a collector in his early days may once have had to acquire the crudities of the artists of a later generation.

Owing, however, to the comparative abundance of their prints at the present day, these artists of

the middle of the nineteenth century cannot be entirely ignored in any work on this subject, if only to warn the reader what to avoid.

The following chapters being primarily written for the beginner, artists whose work is very rare, or whose prints he is unlikely to come across in his search for examples, are not mentioned, unless where necessary from an historical or artistic point of view. For fuller information under this head more advanced works on the subject can be studied (*e.g.*, "History of Japanese Colour-Prints," by von Seidlitz, London; or "Chats on Japanese Prints," by A. D. Ficke, London, 1915).

The examples with which to illustrate this volume have been selected with a view to assist the reader in identifying such prints as he is likely to start a collection with, or to show an artist's characteristics. The suitability of a print for reproduction has also been a factor in making a choice, some prints being better than others in this respect, by reason of the colours employed and their condition.

Hiroshige's landscape prints being those which more readily appeal to the student at first, and which generally form the nucleus of a collection, more examples by him are illustrated, in proportion, than other artists, though the selection throughout has

been varied as much as possible, consistent with the nature of this work.

The signatures and other marks being transcribed by small reference numbers on the margins of the illustrations with a key below, it has not been thought necessary to give a table of reproductions thereof; should a second edition be called for, this may be done. Reproductions of nearly 200 signatures will be found in the catalogue of the print collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington.

The thanks of the author are due to Mr. Shozo Kato for his valuable assistance in deciphering Japanese characters and seals found on prints, and in the transcription and spelling of Japanese names.

BASIL STEWART.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS,
March, 1917.

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Japanese Colour-Prints

CHAPTER I

HOW COLOUR-PRINTS WERE PRODUCED

Old Japanese colour-prints are printed on a sheet of mulberry-bark paper, and are the product of three different craftsmen : the artist who drew the original design, the block-maker or engraver who transferred the design to the wood, and the printer. A block was cut for each colour in addition to the outline or key-block.

The drawing made by the artist, with whose name *alone* the print is generally associated, was done in Indian ink with a brush on very thin paper.

This was passed to the engraver, who pasted it, face downwards, on the wood block (wild cherry-wood) and, cutting through the paper, transferred the outline to the block, afterwards removing the superfluous wood between the lines with chisels and gouges, and so producing an accurate negative in

high relief. Prints which are very early impressions from the block often show the marks of the cutting tools and the grain of the wood.

The artist's design was therefore destroyed, a fact which should be borne in mind when offered as an original a drawing of which prints are known to exist, thus proving it to be a reproduction.

There is, of course, the converse of this, as there are in existence to-day original drawings which were never used for the production of prints therefrom, as, for example, certain designs drawn by Hokusai for the " Hundred Poets " series, but not found as prints.

To economise wood, both sides of the block were engraved, the back being used either for another stage of the same print, or for a different print altogether.

From the outline or key-block a series of proofs was taken, on one of each of which was painted by the artist the part or parts of the print to appear in each separate colour ; from each proof so painted was cut an equivalent block, though if two colours were widely separated they might be put on one block.

When all the required blocks were cut they were then passed on to the printer, who painted the colours on the block with brushes, thus making possible that delightful gradation of colour which is one of the charms of these colour-prints. A sheet of damped paper was laid on each block in turn, and the impression rubbed off by hand with a rubber or pad called a "baren." Correct register was obtained by means of an angle cut in one bottom corner of the block and a straight edge in the other. A single complete print was not printed off at a time, but several impressions were taken off each block in turn until it became necessary to recharge it with colour. Each impression being taken in proper rotation, all colours are of equal intensity. The reader may ask why it was necessary to have a separate block for each colour instead of applying all colours on one block. The reason is that, if done so, the colours would be liable to run into one another, and those first applied would dry before the painting was completed, and in consequence would give a weak impression compared with those applied last.

The whole process, therefore, was hand-work in the fullest sense of the word, and was vastly superior

both artistically and technically, to any modern facsimile reproduction.

Strictly speaking, these prints are not prints as understood in the modern sense, since no printing-press was used, and the colours are not from inks, but from paints mixed with rice-paste as a medium. The process was really a method of producing a painted drawing in large numbers from a hand-coloured block.

These prints were produced almost entirely by the artists of one school, the " Ukiyoye " or popular school of painting, which was founded in the seventeenth century by a certain Iwasa MATABEI, a man of aristocratic birth, who was born in 1577. Matabei and his immediate followers did not produce any prints themselves ; they worked solely as painters, and it was left to a successor, Hishigawa MORONOBU, in the second half of the seventeenth century, to produce the first prints known. These were printed in black only, and occasionally coloured by hand. In the early days of the art (*c.* 1690) but few colours were used printed wholly from blocks, and it was not until the time of HARUNOBU (*c.* 1760) that almost unlimited colours were employed. Such prints were called

The Actor, Ichikawa Danzaburo, as a woman dancer; print in *hoso-ye* form.

[Key: 1 Toyo, 2 kuni (early form (*c.* 1800)), 3 *gwa* (drew), 4 Ichi, 5 kawa, 6 Dan, 7 zabu, 8 ro, 9 Publisher's mark: Yamada-ya]

[Face p. 4.]

nishiki-ye or "brocade pictures," a term still in use.

The Ukiyoye School, from which sprang the art of the colour-printer, was started in Yedo (modern Tokio), then the great art centre of Japan, as a protest against the exclusive and aristocratic Kano and Tosa schools of painting—which were practically inaccessible to the masses of the people—and took its name from the class of subject its artists commonly portrayed.

They depicted the everyday scenes (Ukiyoye means "passing-world pictures") of the common people from which they themselves, with but few exceptions were sprung: their theatres and favourite actors, the inmates of the gay Yoshiwara quarter, street scenes, their festivals, and the hundred and one incidents that filled up their lives.

The art of colour-printing from blocks, however, was only a development of the earlier art of wood-engraving, as books had been illustrated with woodcuts towards the end of the sixteenth century, and it had been used in a very crude form considerably earlier than this.

What the Ukiyoye School did was to discover a

means by which the art of the painter, the engraver, and the printer could be so combined as to produce coloured pictures in quantity. The result was an art, which, at its best, has never been equalled, much less excelled, in its own sphere as a pictorial art.

According to their size and shape, prints are known by different terms. A full-size vertical sheet is called *oban*, about 15 by 10 in.; *chuban*, a medium-size print, 11 by 8 in.; and *koban*, a still smaller size, measuring about 10 by 7 in. The horizontal print, corresponding to the *oban* in size, is termed *yoko-ye*, and is the form generally employed for landscape drawings. Other forms are *kakemono-ye*, two full-sized prints arranged vertically to form a complete picture when joined together; *hashira-ye*, a long, narrow print about 27 by 5 in., made to hang from the pillars (*hashira*) of a Japanese house; *hoso-ye*, a small vertical print often used for single actor portraits (*e.g.*, by Toyokuni) about 12 by 6 in. (*see* Plate 1), and *uchiwa-ye*, a print for mounting as a fan. *Surimono* were a different class of print to any of the foregoing, and were produced for purely private purposes, as greeting cards or souvenirs, much like our Christmas and New Year

Fan Print: View of Suma Beach; one of a series "Views in Various Provinces."

Key: 1 Sada 2 masu 3 *gwa* (drew).

Face p. 6.]

[*Plate No. 2.*

cards. They were almost square in shape, measuring about 8 by 7 in., and sometimes they are made up of multiples of this size, in the form of triptyches or two vertical ones. Particular care was lavished both by the artist, the engraver, and the printer upon their production, the decorative effect being increased by the use of gold, silver, bronze, and mother-of-pearl, while relief-printing (*gauffrage*) was liberally employed. They were also, as a rule, printed on a much better quality paper, being thicker and softer than the ordinary prints sold in the street. Some collectors, indeed, reject surimono on the ground that they are not true examples of art, because artistic effect is produced by mere complication of technique, so that the medium employed, instead of the result, has become their sole object. Even so, fine surimono are very beautiful, while they show the skill of the engraver and the printer at its highest level.

Some of the finest surimono were produced by pupils of Hokusai, who excelled even their master in this respect. Of these Hokkei, Gakutei, Shinsai, and Yanagawa Shigenobu were the chief.

The art of the colour-print artist seems to us all

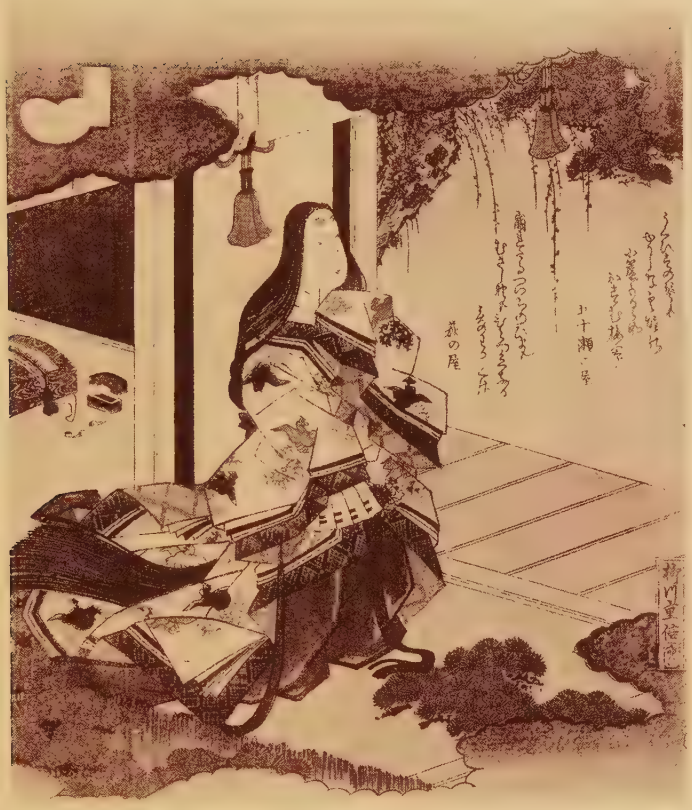
the more wonderful when we remember that, at the time these prints were being produced in Japan, Europe had only the coarsest of picture-books and the roughest of woodcuts to show as an equivalent while they were sold in the streets of Yedo for a few pence. Could their artists have foreseen the prices which their work commands to-day, they might well have dropped dead from astonishment.

Even at the present day no Western pictorial art can approach the artistic excellence, in composition, line, and colour, of these prints produced a hundred to a hundred and fifty years ago; and it is to be regretted, from an artistic point of view, that the art has been so completely lost.

While, doubtless, craftsmen are still to be found who could equal the skill of the old engravers, the knowledge to produce the exquisite native colours to which these prints owe so much of their charm is quite dead. Instead they are obliged to use imported aniline colours such as would have made the old painters shudder. Even in 1858 they were beginning to be used.

A modern school of artists has, however, sprung up in recent years, but their work bears the obvious

Yanagawa SHIGENOBU (1786-1832.)



1
2
3
4
5

SURIMONO: A beautiful Court Lady.

Key. 1 Yana 2 gawa 3 Shigè 4 nobu Seal: 5 Yanagawa.

stamp of having been produced for export, and tends to mere prettiness of the chocolate-box order.

In the revival of colour-printing by the methods employed by the Ukiyoye School, the chief difficulty, even after the requisite skill in cutting the block has been acquired after years of patient labour, seems to be in the actual printing. Such European and American artists as have produced prints *more Japanico* have always been obliged to employ a Japanese printer to take the "pulls."

As a test, a collector known to the writer gave an original outline block to an English printer to try his skill on; the resultant print was little more than a smudge, due, no doubt, to the fact that ink was employed instead of paints, and that our method of taking "pulls" is different from that employed by the Japanese printer.

No art has had such a meteoric career as that of the Japanese colour-printer. Taking 1745 as the earliest date of the true colour-*print*, in which the colour was impressed from a block as distinct from colour applied by hand to the print itself, it reached its zenith during the period of Kiyonaga and

his contemporaries, down to the death of Utamaro in 1806.

It remained more or less at its high level of excellence till about 1825, after which date the decline set in surely and steadily, ever hastening with greater rapidity to its downfall as each year passed. For a brief period the advent of Hiroshige arrested the decline, but his genius only threw into sharper relief the inferior work of his contemporaries, who almost without exception began to copy him, in compliance with the insistent public demand for prints *à la Hiroshige*. It became practically, if not actually, extinct upon the death of Hiroshige in 1858.

Thus we see that the art rose, flourished, and finally declined within the space of a little more than a century, a period almost equalled sometimes by that of a single lifetime.

It died, not from lack of talent to carry it on, but from the want of a public to appreciate it, a public which preferred quantity to quality and which, as a consequence, got the art it demanded. The opening up of Japan to intercourse with the outer world was an additional factor in hastening the end. With an increase in the cost of living, low

as it was according to our standards, coupled with a demand for things European, it did not pay to produce these prints by the old hand methods, and still sell them at the prices people were accustomed to give for them, with the result that the art became lost through disuse, the craftsmen being obliged to seek some other means of livelihood.

CHAPTER II

ON FORMING A COLLECTION

THE collecting of old Japanese colour-prints, formerly the hobby of a select few, is to-day finding an ever-increasing number of votaries. As their beauty and charm become more widely appreciated, so do more art-lovers desire to possess them. The result is that prices, particularly for prints by the early masters—known as the Primitives—and for rare examples of later artists, have been greatly enhanced within recent years. The would-be collector, however, whose means are limited need not at once conclude that it is hopeless for him to gratify his desire to acquire these artistic treasures. No art covers so wide a field as that of the Japanese colour-print; nor can any other offer such a varied choice, so that almost any taste and any purse can find material wherewith to form a collection.

By the exercise of care, and by seizing opportuni-

ties as they occur, a collection can be formed for a relatively modest outlay which will be a perpetual source of pleasure to its owner and his friends. The one point to bear in mind is that discrimination is the essence of all collecting. Aim at acquiring copies as near their pristine state as possible, unless a print is some great rarity, when a relatively inferior copy, that is somewhat faded or discoloured, is preferable to none at all. Many a collection has been improved by throwing out the inferior choices of early days.

Again, personal taste is of more moment than mere value. To some, Sharaku's actor prints, which are extremely rare and cost anything over £30 apiece, will appear as masterpieces to be had at all costs; others will think them merely ugly caricatures and much prefer a good landscape by Hiroshige at two or three pounds.

It is, of course, desirable, as far as one's means will allow, to have examples of all types and periods, even by relatively minor artists, for the sake of study and comparison. When one has acquired, as a foundation, a collection of (say) a hundred and fifty to two hundred prints of moderate price, up

to £5 each (average of all will perhaps be about thirty to forty shillings), one can then become more discriminating and purchase only an occasional fine example by such artists as Kiyonaga, Shuncho, Koriusai, Harunobu, Yeishi, Shunsho, and so forth, and the rarer prints of Hokusai and Hiroshige.

The period at which the Japanese colour-print was at its best, the golden age of the art, lay between the years 1765 and 1825, that is, from the time of the invention of the true polychrome print, about 1764, under the sway of HARUNOBU, down to the death of TOYOKUNI I. Excellent examples of the work of this period can still be obtained at quite moderate prices, some, of course, much more easily than others, but a collector should have little difficulty in acquiring a fairly representative set of prints issued between these dates.

The writer's experience is that, amongst non-collectors, the impression prevails that the collecting of Japanese prints is an expensive hobby, and many would-be collectors are consequently afraid to indulge their artistic tastes therein. To remove this conception is one of the objects of this volume.

As stated at the opening of this chapter, Japanese

prints can be had at all prices, from a few shillings to many pounds.

While the low-priced prints contain much worthless rubbish, excellent landscape subjects by Hiroshige can be obtained for a pound or two, provided discrimination is used, as there is much work bearing his signature on the market, printed after his death, which is better avoided.

A comparatively cheap print, provided it is a genuine old one and in good condition, is preferable to a modern reproduction of a rarity.

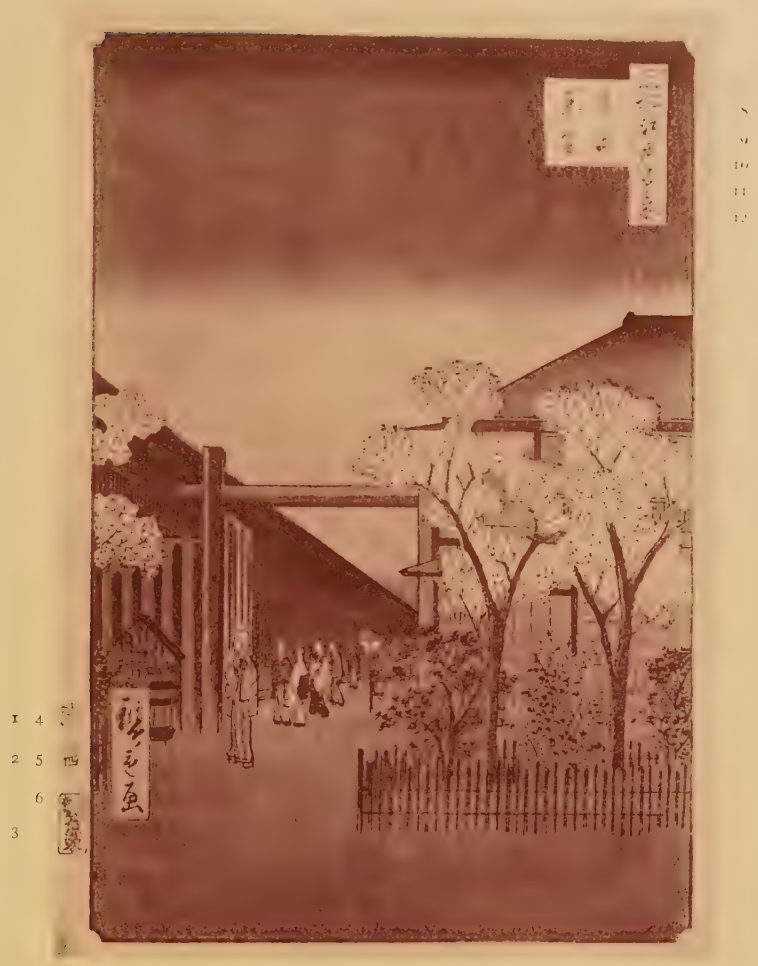
It is difficult to give any general indications as to what should be paid for prints. Much depends on circumstances, and everything on condition. According to its state, a print might be worth £50, £5, or only £2. The writer has had excellent first edition copies of prints by Hiroshige offered him at ten to twenty shillings each, for which twice or thrice that sum has been given in an auction sale; but the collector who obtains a really good Hiroshige print from one of his rarer series, in a first-class condition, for less than £2 or £3, is lucky.

There is an enormous number of inferior Hiroshige prints in existence, which, from an artistic point

of view, are of very little value. So great was the demand for his work as a landscape artist (due chiefly to the fact that, for a certain period, from 1842 to 1854, prints of courtesans and actors were forbidden by law) that in order to produce prints in sufficient quantities the printing was hurried, so that the outline and colours did not register, neither were the colours well graded.

Again, many of his prints were reprinted in subsequent editions after his death, when the blocks had become worn through constant use, or were re-cut from an old print, and when European aniline colours were becoming much used in Japan. Such late editions and reprints can be readily detected by the coarse outlines and vicious, staring colours.

Prints of this nature will frequently be met with in his " One Hundred Views of Yedo " series, almost the last work he executed. Copies of the first edition in fine state are comparatively rare, and out of the total of 118 prints in the complete set, only about a third of them can be described as masterpieces, in which the design, printing, and colouring are excellent. The majority, unfortunately, are very inferior, and are evidently the work of his pupil, Hiroshige II.,



Night Revellers returning home at Daybreak from the Yoshiwara; from the "Hundred Views of Yedo" series *(first edition)*.

[Key: 1 Aratamè seal: ('examined') 2 Date seal: Snake 4 =4th month, 1857 3 Publisher's seal: Uwo-yei 4 Hiro 5 shigè late form 6 *gwa* (drew)

7 Mei 8 sho 9 Ye 10 do 11 Hiaku (100) 12 Kei (views)

pronounce Hiak'kei]

whose aid he sometimes called in, as it is impossible to imagine from their crudeness that they can be the work of the great master. These remarks also apply to certain views in his last series, "Thirty-six Views of Fuji," a series which he did not live to complete, and perhaps, in a lesser degree, to his "Sixty-odd Provinces" (1856), and "Views on the Tokaido" (upright), (1855). Some authorities, particularly Japanese collectors, attribute the last-mentioned series entirely to Hiroshige II., but as they are dated three years before Hiroshige's death, and as it was contrary to etiquette, an etiquette most strictly observed, for two artists to work independently under the same name while either of them was still alive, the evidence that they are the work of the master rather than that of the pupil would seem to hold the field. This series, however, is generally of a lower order of merit than is usually associated with Hiroshige's work, and from the poor design and colouring of many of the prints in it, it seems fairly certain the pupil was called in to assist. Well and carefully-printed copies are rare, whereas poor ones with crude colouring are common. One of the best scenes in this series, when well printed, is the view of travellers entering the

village of Fujikawa under snow. Another good scene is the one here illustrated, *Station Chiryu.* (*See* Plate 5.)

Mr. Happer, of New York, the well-known authority on Hiroshige, was the first collector to investigate thoroughly, chiefly by the date-seal found on each print, the question of the authorship of the various series signed Hiroshige. Previously it was thought *all* vertical prints so signed were by Hiroshige II., but this view is now pretty generally abandoned.

Prints in which some large object, such as a tree-trunk, the mast of a ship, the body and legs of a horse, is thrust prominently into the foreground, blotting out the view and thus spoiling the whole effect of the picture, may generally be ascribed to Hiroshige II. Prints of this nature often occur in the "Hundred Views of Yedo" series, which, being the most extensive, contains a larger proportion of the pupil's work. His best contribution to this set is Plate no. 48, *Akasaka Kiribata*, which he supplied to later editions to take the place of the original block by Hiroshige which was accidentally damaged or destroyed, probably by fire. It is signed "Hiroshige 2nd," and

View of Chiryu on the Tokaido; from the upright Tokaido series.

[Key: 1 Aratamè seal: ('examined') 2 Hiro 3 shigè (late form) 4 *gwa* (drew) 5 Date seal: Hare 7 = 7th month, 1855 6 Publisher's seal: Tsuta-ya Juzaburo of Yedo.

7 8 9 Go-ju-san (5×10+3)=53 10 Tsugi 11 Mei 12 sho 13 zu 14 ye 15 Station No. (4×10)=40]

is considered his best work so signed. It may also be distinguished from the first edition by being a rain-scene.

In all the foregoing series first edition copies *only* are those worth collecting, later issues being of little value either materially or artistically. First edition copies in perfect state are comparatively rare, whereas later and inferior impressions outnumber them by at least fifty to one, perhaps a hundred to one. The former may be recognised, firstly, by having the publisher's seal and the date-seal upon them; secondly, by being carefully printed and the colours well graded. Later impressions also often have an entirely different colour scheme, while the repellent harshness of the colours betrays them at once.

In the "Hundred Views of Yedo" series, the seals will be found on the margin of the print (*vide* Plate 4). Sometimes, as when prints of this series have been mounted in a book, the margins will be found to have been trimmed, thereby entirely or partly cutting off the seals; an otherwise perfect impression may thus be spoilt.

And here let us add a note of warning: never cut or trim prints in any way. Torn or rough edges

may be covered by a mount, holes in the print itself can be patched from the back, and for this purpose an old worthless print can be kept from which pieces of the right colour can be cut wherewith to make repairs. But beyond this a print should not be touched in any way, and if the collector confines himself to selecting only copies in a good state of preservation, there should be no necessity to do more.

Seals and other marks on the margin of a print, outside the picture itself, should not be covered up, but the mount should be cut to show them.

In the "Sixty-odd Provinces" series the seals appear sometimes on the print itself, and sometimes (though less frequently) on the margin. First edition copies have the publisher's seal, date-seal, two small round inspector's (or censor's) seals, and, in some views, the engraver's seal. Very early impressions will show the marks of the engraver's tools on the block, and the grain of the wood.

The vertical "Tokaido" set has the date-seal and publisher's seal on the print itself, as has also the "Thirty-six Views of Fuji" series.

While on the subject of date-seals, it should perhaps be pointed out that the seal *by itself*

does not necessarily prove a print to be a first edition copy. Many dated prints, particularly in the " Hundred Views " series, are met with which, by the poor printing and crude colours, cannot be first edition copies. As the date-seals were cut on the block at the time it was engraved, and not stamped on the finished print after being " pulled " from the block, the date thereon is no evidence as to the time of printing.

Thus, though the " Views of Fuji " series is dated, on each print, 1858, it is stated in the preface on the title-page thereto that the designs were received in the spring of 1858, that the artist, Hiroshige, died in the autumn of the same year, and that they were published as a memorial to him in 1859, the date on the title-page.

Of course the difference of a single year between the dates of engraving the blocks and issuing the prints, as in this instance, is of little account ; it is merely stated to show implicit faith should not be placed in dates alone. It is when the difference amounts to a considerable period that prints cease to be first edition copies.

A dated print, therefore, should be judged by its

condition to determine if it is a first edition or not; that is to say, the printing should be well done, the colours carefully graded and not staring aniline dyes. At the same time, a collector who sets out to obtain a complete set of a series must not expect to find even first editions of uniform excellence; the masterpieces are, unfortunately, few. This may have been due to the artist superintending the printing of those views only which pleased him most, or which he thought would be more popular.

To revert to the question of prices, experience is the only real guide as to what should be paid for any particular print. Provided a print is in good condition, colours fresh, outline sharp, paper not discoloured nor worm-eaten, it is as a rule worth its price. Fresh colours, however, are not in themselves evidence of an early impression. As a block required continually re-charging with fresh colour, a very late impression might easily show good colour; one should look instead at the sharpness of the outline.

Poor copies, in which colours are badly faded, or the printing is faulty, or in which other defects are apparent, are best left alone, unless the print is some

Fuji from the Musashi Tama River; one of the "Thirty-six Views of Fuji" series (*first edition*).

Key: 1 Fu, 2 ji, 3 san, 4 ju, 5 Roku, 6 kei (view) — Rok'kei, 7 Hiro, 8 shigè — late form, 9 *gwa* (drew), 10 Date seal: Horse 4 —4th month, 1858, 11 Publisher: Tsuta-ya]

rarity, when moderate defects may be overlooked—though, of course, the reason for its rarity should be kept in mind. Rarity, apart from interest or association, is a deceptive quality; it is not to be always associated with the number of copies in existence.

Thus, Kunisada's portrait of Hiroshige is rare because such copies as are in existence are highly coveted by collectors by reason of the subject, and therefore rarely change hands. Thus, this particular print is rare by reason of the subject it portrays, and not because it is by Kunisada, whose prints are amongst the commonest.

Though there are still collectors—but their numbers are dwindling—who prefer faded or discoloured prints because of the mellowness thereby imparted to them, this point of view is, we think, a mistaken one. The chief object of a collector should be to obtain prints as near as possible in the pristine condition in which they left the printer's hands, so that we may see in them the artist's individuality. To prefer discoloured or badly faded prints (slight fading due to age is not detrimental, as the colours all tone in an equal degree) to fresh ones is akin to

choosing a piece of cracked or broken porcelain in preference to a perfect specimen.

Certain colours, however, particularly in prints by the earlier artists, undergo a complete transformation in course of time. Thus, a certain blue may change to yellow; pink, one of the most fugitive colours of any, fades altogether; white—but rarely used—and a certain red, both made from lead oxide, turn black with exposure.

Surimono, in which colours were employed made from metals, *e.g.*, silver, gold, and bronze, are even more susceptible to light, and extra care should be taken to preserve them in all their original brilliance.

For this reason, therefore, it is best not to keep prints—at least not the better examples in a collection—hanging on a wall for any length of time, and under no circumstances to allow bright sunlight to fall on them. If a collector wishes to decorate his walls with them, they should be hung where no bright sun will fall on them, and they should consist of comparatively cheap examples of which large numbers exist, so that, should they fade in course of time, no particular material or artistic loss is occasioned.

The better and more valued treasures in a collection, particularly if they are unusually good copies, should be kept out of the light in portfolios or suitable cases. For the collector should remember that he is laying by treasures for future generations ; that these prints represent what is practically, if not actually, a lost art ; and that as time goes on they will become scarcer and scarcer. Upon the care, therefore, expended upon their preservation to-day will depend the enjoyment of art-lovers of future generations.

It is, perhaps, to be regretted that every year an increasing proportion of the number of prints still in existence find their way, either by purchase or bequest, into public museums and institutions, where they do not, as a rule, receive the care which is their due, the treatment they receive being such, in some cases, as would shock the private collector.

If they are hung in galleries exposed to sunlight they fade, and will in time disappear altogether. The general public pass them by as something they neither appreciate nor understand, largely because they lack guidance or instruction; while the interested inquirer is left to wade as best he may through

a chaotic mass of often loose and unmounted prints.

Americans recognise much more fully than we do that educational work is an important function of a museum, and that the preservation of rare and beautiful objects is not its sole purpose. A museum should help the public who visit it to enjoy its treasures, instead of gazing at them as mere curiosities which, in nine cases out of ten, they do not understand. The institution of an official guide in the British and South Kensington Museums is a step in the right direction, which is worth following elsewhere.

Mr. Ficke ("Chats on Japanese Prints") expresses similar opinions as the writer, as to the desirability of prints being in private collections rather than in a public museum. He says: "In public collections the prints are of service or pleasure to almost nobody; while in private collections their service and pleasure to the owner and his friends are great, and the same opportunities are easily opened to anyone who is qualified to profit by them. Therefore it seems better that, upon the death of a collector, his prints should be sold, in order that, as Edmond

Station 8 on the Tokaido: Hiratsuka. (*First Edition*).

[Key: 1 Hiro 2 shigè (early form) 3 *gwa* (drew) 4 Publisher's seal: Hōyeido 5 Kiwamè seal: ('perfect') 6 *Title of series*: To-kai-do Go - ju - san (5 × 10 + 3) = 53 Tsugi 7 Place-name (next seal)

Face p. 26.]

[*Plate No. 7.*

de Goncourt directed in the case of his collection, those treasures which have been so great and so personal a delight to the owner may pass on into the hands of such others as will find in them the same satisfaction. 'My wish is,' he wrote in his will, 'that my prints, my curios, my books—in a word those things of art which have been the joy of my life—shall not be consigned to the cold tomb of a museum . . . ; but I require that they shall all be dispersed under the hammer of the auctioneer, so that the pleasure which their acquisition has given me shall be given again . . . to some inheritor of my own taste.'"

CHAPTER III

FORGERIES, IMITATIONS, AND REPRINTS

As is the case with almost anything a person may collect as his fancy dictates, the collector of old Japanese colour-prints has to be on his guard against forgeries, reprints, and modern reproductions.

There is nothing to be said against reprints or reproductions which are honestly sold as such ; the danger is they may be used by the unscrupulous to deceive the unwary, and the object here is to show how they may be distinguished from the genuine article. Instances are not wanting where certain reproductions have been made with such skill that collectors of many years' standing have been deceived by them, until an accidental comparison with an undoubted genuine copy has revealed the fraud.

But instances such as this are rare, and are confined to prints whose rarity (and consequently higher

value) make it worth while to go to the considerable trouble and expense involved to produce a facsimile such as will deceive the cleverest. The average reproduction, however, is generally so obvious, once its defects have been learnt, that no collector need be deceived by it. A golden rule is, if at any time suspicious of a print yet unable to say exactly why, but feeling by intuition that there is something wrong with it, discard it.

Reproductions, then, are prints taken from a modern wood block cut from an original print, or from a photographic process block. Generally the former process is the one employed.

Reprints are prints which have been taken from an original block, but so long after the block was cut that the outline is coarse and defective and the colouring poor, usually from modern aniline dyes.

So long as any of the old blocks are in existence, such reprints are always possible, but comparatively few of the many thousands which were engraved exist to-day for such use. It is simpler to make reproductions.

Reprints, however, are not a modern invention; it is known the Yedo publishers sometimes sold

their discarded wood blocks to publishers in another town, who skilfully recut them where badly worn and sold prints from them. As such prints were naturally issued after the death of the artist who originally drew the design for them, they were often artificially aged by exposing to the fumes of charcoal, by means of tea-stains, and dirt. In the absence, therefore, of clear evidence (*e.g.*, a Yedo publisher's mark) as to genuineness, discoloured and worm-eaten prints should be suspect.

Forgeries are, as the term implies, prints produced in the style and bearing the signature of some well-known artist, done either during his lifetime by a rival artist, or after his death.

Practically the only guard against forgeries, particularly against those done during an artist's lifetime, is a close study of his work in prints about which there is no question as to their genuineness, whereby the collector will discern at once, by the characteristics of the drawing, whether it is the work of the master or that of an imitator. Forgeries, however, are rare, and are confined to the work of a comparatively few artists. Utamaro, owing to the great popularity he enjoyed, suffered consider-

ably in this respect, so that he was obliged, for the sake of his reputation, to sometimes sign himself "the real Utamaro." This signature, however, he only used on prints which had his especial approval, and consequently it is not often met with.

The old publishers did not hesitate to forge the signature of an artist whose prints were in great demand upon prints by another which did not sell so readily. This was accomplished by cutting out of the block the real artist's signature, and letting in a fresh piece of wood in exactly the same place with the forged signature of another designer. So neatly was this done that the finished print showed no sign of the block having been tampered with.

To supply the demand for prints by Utamaro, publishers employed the pupils of his school who made use of his signature. But every artist has his own idiosyncrasies, as revealed in the pose of a head, the drawing of the features, the fold of a robe, or the curve of a finger, which cannot be exactly copied, and which distinguishes his own work from that of his imitators.

In the same way the collector must learn to distinguish between the work of different artists who used

the same artistic name, though not at the same time, as such would have been contrary to professional etiquette. Sometimes when an artist assumed another artistic name he bestowed his former name upon his chief pupil as a recognition of merit. Or, as was more common, the leading pupil adopted the name of the master upon the death of the latter. Such is the case with Toyokuni, a name which was used by at least five different persons, thus carrying it down to quite recent times. With only three, however, are we concerned here, whose work appears to be confused, one with the other, to some considerable extent. This, at least, is the experience of the writer.

Toyokuni I. died in 1825; Kunisada, his pupil, adopted the name in 1844. There is, therefore, at least nineteen to twenty years' interval between the prints of these two bearing the signature of Toyokuni; and in this interval prints underwent considerable change in drawing, and particularly in the colour-scheme employed. Toyokuni's colours are soft and pleasant compared to Kunisada's, which, by 1845, were becoming crude and harsh. Another distinguishing mark is that Kunisada's

Utagawa Toyokuni (1769-1825).

Court Ladies on the 'engawa' of a house in winter-time; *centre sheet of a triptych.* (Very fine work in Toyokuni's early style)

[Key: 1 Toyo 2 kuni (very early form) 3 *gwa* (drew) 4 Kiwamè seal: ('perfect') 5 Publisher: Yeijudo of Yedo]

Toyokuni is frequently enclosed in a cartouch, a device *never* employed by his master. It is not, however, so easy to distinguish between Toyokuni and his other pupil—and adopted son—Toyoshige, though close study will reveal their different characteristics. Toyoshige, on the death of his master, married the widow, and adopted his name, which he used for the remainder of his career.

The majority of his prints were produced within this period, that is, from 1825 to 1835, and are signed either "Gosotei Toyokuni" (in which case no confusion is caused), or merely "Toyokuni." In this latter case, as his prints are much more akin to his master's both in style and colouring, it is sometimes difficult to say which of them is the real artist. Toyokuni I.'s signature, however, is generally more carefully drawn and in smaller characters. Kunisada never recognised the claims of Toyoshige as Toyokuni II., as he frequently signed himself "the second Toyokuni."

To revert to modern reproductions and their detection, both the paper on which they are printed and the colours used form a fairly ready means by which they can be distinguished from the genuine old

print. Old prints are upon a peculiar paper difficult to describe, but easily recognised with practice, while their soft, mellow colours are almost impossible to imitate. Thanks to modern processes of reproduction the outline of an imitation may be line for line exactly like the original; but even if the paper should be a close imitation, the colours at once proclaim its modernity and afford the safest guide to genuineness. They are flat and muddy in hue, and lack the soft brilliance of the old colours; in fact, the difference is usually so marked that it seems hardly likely that anyone with an eye for colour and harmony would be deceived by them.

The writer has noticed, however, that nine people out of ten judge the age of a print solely by its appearance; that is, if it is fresh and clean they put it down at once as quite modern; if faded and discoloured, it must be old. Such individuals seem unaware of the fact that if there is one thing easier than another to imitate, it is age. Freshness, apart from any other evidence, should never be regarded as a sign of recent printing any more than discoloured paper, faded colours, or damaged condition, such as worm-holes, are necessarily the adjuncts of an

old print. Such, indeed, are the first devices the forger calls to his aid to deceive the unwary. Another source of error in judging the age of a print solely by its appearance lies in the water-lines which appear in old prints in good, clean condition, and which can be seen in any laid paper of present-day manufacture. Prints as far back as 1700 have these same water-lines in them. The water-lines in modern paper merely represent the attempt of the present-day manufacturer to copy the Japanese, because genuine Japanese paper is recognised as being the best in the world. The freshness of a print is often due to the fact that it has spent the greater part of its existence stored away with others as stock copies, that is, remainders of unsold editions, and has been brought to light long after it was printed. The "remainders" of a modern book-publisher is no new expedient for disposing of surplus stock. Also it should be remembered that, except for a few specially chosen prints, the Japanese did not expose their pictures, as we do, on the walls of their houses, but they spent the greater part of their existence put away, and were only brought forth to be looked at on some very special occasion, or for the benefit

of an honoured guest. The prints, however, of some favourite, as Utamaro or Yeishi, were frequently used to decorate the paper screens and partitions which are such a feature of the Japanese home. They consequently suffered considerable wear and tear in course of time, and became discoloured by the fumes from the charcoal fires used for cooking and warming. The writer has seen more Utamaro prints damaged in this way than those of any other artist, in some cases the outline and colour having disappeared altogether and leaving only the black mass of a coiffure.

If an old print be held up to the light and looked at through the back, the whole picture will be seen as clearly as from the front ; in a modern one only the patches of colour will appear. This is due to the fact that the old paper was absorbent.

The grace and beauty of composition, the excellence in the sweep of the lines, the rich and glowing yet perfectly harmonious colours, which are characteristic of all old prints, are lacking in modern ones.

In this category (*i.e.*, of modern work) should also be included prints issued between the years 1865 and

1880, in which the technique employed was the same as in genuine old prints. Such prints, by their crude and glaring colours made from aniline dyes, and often careless printing, which shock every artistic sense, may be dismissed at once as worthless. Sometimes, however, the actual printing is very good, the outline being sharp and the register perfect, showing that the technique employed could be as excellent as formerly, but was nullified by the bad colours used.

It is just the prints of this period of which there is such an abundance, and against which the novice should be warned, as he is apt, otherwise, in his newly-formed enthusiasm, to imagine that such constitute the famous old colour-prints of Japan.

Such, also, are the prints that a collector who goes to Japan is likely to pick up, when he would do better to confine his activities to London. Japan itself has been ransacked long ago by collectors and art dealers from Europe and America, who have left behind only the late and worthless specimens. The Japanese did not realise, thirty to forty years ago, what art treasures they were allowing to leave the

country, and now, all too late, they are regretting their loss and are endeavouring to buy back at far higher prices, both for private and public collections, the prints they once sold for a few pence.

This previous lack of appreciation for a native art was largely due to the plebeian origin of these prints. The subjects portrayed were such as appealed only to the masses, being largely either theatrical or dealing with the inmates of the Yoshiwara, both subjects being taboo with the aristocracy, who would have nothing to do with the theatre, the people who patronised it, or the artists who drew it. In fact, the artists of the Ukiyoye School were looked down upon by the aristocracy as almost the lowest members of society. The result was the art of the colour-print artist had no wealthy patrons to save it to the country of its origin against the competition of the foreign dealer and collector. Also, at the time Japan was opened to foreigners, in 1868, so great was the desire to acquire the products of Western civilisation for their own profit and enjoyment, that they neglected their own arts, even if they did not actually despise them. The inevitable reaction

quickly set in when they realised their mistake, but not before the foreign collector had had time to acquire a considerable quantity of their art products, and particularly their colour-prints.

CHAPTER IV

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE ARTISTS OF THE UKIYOYE SCHOOL

THE total number of colour-print artists, from the commencement of the school down to 1860, lies between 250 and 300 names. This large number includes artists of varying degrees of ability and productivity and, considering the relatively short life of the school, gives us an idea of its wide popularity ; but the number with which the collector need concern himself is considerably less than this total ; a collection which contained examples by half this number would be a very large one.

For example, the Happer collection sold at Sotheby's in 1909, one of the largest private collections ever put up to auction, contained prints by 182 different artists. The Swettenham collection, another very large collection, sold in 1912, was representative of a hundred artists ; while of the

Baker and Hilditch collections, sold last year, the former contained about a hundred and the latter about eighty artists.

The art is generally divided into three or four periods ; (*i.*) the Primitives, from the foundation of the school by MATABEI to the invention of the true polychrome print in the time of HARUNOBU (*c.* 1765) ; (*ii.*) the second period, from 1765 to the death of UTAMARO in 1806 ; (*iii.*) the third period, 1806 to 1825 ; and the fourth, the decline from 1825 to 1860. A fifth period, known as the downfall, from 1860 onwards, might be added, but the work of this period, as pointed out in our last chapter, is so inferior that it hardly merits attention except, perhaps, from the historical point of view.

Of the above periods the second and third represent the colour-print at its best, the first being mainly one of development.

It is not proposed in these pages to do more than give a brief summary of the better-known artists, such as a collector is likely to meet with at the beginning. Detailed historical accounts of them and their work are left to larger volumes on the subject. Some names, however, cannot be omitted

even in a brief survey such as this, on historical grounds, and even though their prints are to-day very scarce and but rarely met with. Other artists, again, confined themselves to illustrating books, a branch of print-designing somewhat outside our scope.

Amongst the Primitives, MATABEI and MORONOBU have already been mentioned. There is also Torii KIYONOBU (1664-1729), the founder of the Torii sub-school, a school which applied itself chiefly to theatrical subjects. He was followed by KIYOMASU (1679-1762), whose work to-day is rare. The third head of the Torii school was KIYOMITSU (1735-1785), son of KIYOMASU. Contemporary with the Torii school was the Okumura school, founded by Okumura MASANOBU (1685-1764), one of the most eminent of the early artists. He started life as a bookseller and publisher, and during his life as a colour-print artist used other names, Hogetsudo being, perhaps, the most frequent, in addition to that by which he is generally known. He is said to have invented the lacquer-print, in which lacquer is used to heighten the colours, and his prints are remarkable for the richness of effect produced with

only the use of two colours in addition to the black of the outline block. In von Seidlitz's "History of Japanese Colour-Prints," at p. 6, is reproduced in colours a two-colour print by Toyonobu, the original of which is in the British Museum, which gives an excellent idea of the beauty and richness of effect which these early artists were able to produce with such simple means. Prints by MASANOBU are very scarce. TOYONOBU was an important artist of this period, whose later work carries us into the second period. He lived from 1711 to 1785.

We now come to HARUNOBU (1725-1770), who, by making full use of improvements at this time discovered by a certain printer and engraver in the art of colour-printing, brought into being the true polychrome print. He shunned actors, whom he despised, and turned his brush to the portrayal of women. Most of his prints are a small, almost square size, and are the earliest examples in which a background is introduced.

We have already referred to forgeries. Harunobu only worked as a colour-print artist about ten or twelve years. During the Meiwa period (1764-1771) there was a great demand by the public for

his prints, and after his death Shiba KOKAN (1747-1818) was employed by his publisher to imitate them. This he did, usually not signing his productions, but sometimes signing them Suzuki Harunobu. He also imitated Harunobu over the signature of Harushige, thus pretending, by using the prefix "Haru," to be his pupil.

Shiba Kokan wrote his memoirs, which were published after his death, and he therein boldly states that he had forged many of the most popular prints signed Harunobu. If Kokan could deceive the public of his day, it is hardly to be expected that we shall be any cleverer in the twentieth century; but the collector may rest satisfied with the thought that what was good enough for the art-loving Japanese in 1775 is good enough for him, and that Kokan must have been a consummate artist.

What the collector, however, should be on his guard against are *modern* forgeries of Harunobu, who is one of the few artists who have been forged or reproduced during the last twenty years or so to any extent. The chief warning against them are the muddy colours; but in suspicious cases it

is better, if possible, to compare them with undoubted genuine examples.

Almost as famous as Harunobu is KORIUSAI, who worked from 1760 to 1780, and who is best known by his long, narrow pillar-prints (*hashira-ye*), measuring about 27 inches by 5 inches. As these pillar-prints were intended for internal decoration and use, to hang on the pillars (*hashira*) of a house, far fewer in proportion have survived to our day than is the case with the ordinary full-size sheet. Doubtless a large number were lost in the fires which broke out so frequently and with such widespread destruction in Japanese villages and towns; and that so many prints have survived at all to delight the art-lover of the twentieth century is probably due to the fact that they were not, as a rule, kept in the living-rooms, but were stored in a go-down outside the house, or in a cellar.

Consequently these pillar-prints are very rare. Apart from their beauty, the wonderful talent displayed in the amount of composition, yet withal without crowding, portrayed on a sheet but five inches wide, excites our admiration for the designers of these narrow prints. Koriusai was one of the few

cases of an artist of the Ukiyoye school who was not of the artisan class. He was a Samurai, or feudal retainer to a Daimyo and, on the death of his master, became a Ronin, that is, unattached, and took up the calling of an artist as a means of livelihood. In signing his prints he sometimes dropped the final syllable of his name, putting only Koriu.

Katsukawa SHUNSHO (1726-1792) is another important artist, whose work consists chiefly of actor portraits, often in *hoso-ye* form, which are not very rare, thanks to his large output, but vary in quality. A distinguished follower of his is Ippitsusai BUNCHO (*w.* 1764-1796), but his prints are exceedingly rare.

We now come to KIYONAGA (1742-1815), who became the fourth head of the Torii school, and in whom and his immediate followers and contemporaries the colour-print reached its highest excellence. His triptyches are particularly fine. The best examples of his work are naturally very rare, as, being amongst a collector's prized possessions, they rarely come into the market except when his collection is dispersed after his death. With the exercise of patience, however, examples of Kiyonaga's work

may be picked up, but one must not expect to do so for an expenditure of less than £5 or £6, even for a somewhat discoloured print, while a good copy will fetch at least £10 to £15.

A pupil of Shunsho, but a follower of Kiyonaga in style, was Katsukawa SHUNCHO, who worked from about 1770 to 1800. Owing to the similarity of sound, Shunsho and Shuncho may be confused, but the written characters "cho" and "sho" differ considerably. In the same way the "sho" in Yeisho differs from the "sho" in Shunsho. The collector will come across other instances of differently written characters having the same sound, *e.g.*, Shun*sen* and Yei*sen*.

Shuncho's work is the equal of Kiyonaga's, but it is rare.

Another pupil of the Katsukawa school, with examples of whose work the collector is likely to meet, is SHUNSEN, pupil of SHUNYEI (1769-1819), who worked between the years 1790 and 1820. He designed both figure studies and landscapes, and a colour scheme he employed of rose-pink, apple-green, and a slatey-blue is very pleasing. He also did book-illustrations. SHUNYEI, his master, is

known by his actor portraits. Other Katsukawa pupils are SHUNZAN (*w.* 1776-1800), and SHUNTEI (1769-1820); prints by both these are rare. Utagawa TOYOHARU (1733-1814) chiefly claims attention as the founder of the Utagawa sub-school, and as the pioneer of purely landscape drawings in the Ukiyoye school. It was one of his pupils, Toyohiro, who trained the great Hiroshige, with Hokusai the greatest landscape artist of Japan; and another pupil, Toyokuni, had innumerable followers, so that the Utagawa school was the most numerous of any, and carried the art, though in a very debased form, down to modern times. Toyoharu's prints are very rare.

Upon the retirement of Kiyonaga from the field of colour-print designing, we enter upon the period of UTAMARO (1754-1806) and his contemporaries. Utamaro was the son and pupil of Toriyama Sekiyen, a painter of the Chinese School, and was one of the most graceful and popular of the Ukiyoye artists. He is among the best known to European collectors, his being the first colour-prints to be seen in Europe, and he is famous for his beautiful figure studies of women, which place him in almost the first

rank of Japanese artists. Towards the end of his career, however, his figures lose much of their grace by reason of the exaggerations he employs, drawn out as they are to an impossible length, till one expects to see them collapse altogether.

The Utamaro style is thus well described by von Seidlitz in his " History of Japanese Colour-Prints " :

" He created an absolutely new type of female beauty. At first he was content to draw the head in normal proportions and quite definitely round in shape ; only the neck on which this head was posed was already notably slender. . . . Towards the middle of the tenth decade these exaggerated proportions of the body had reached such an extreme that the heads were twice as long as they were broad, set upon slim, long necks, which in turn swayed upon very narrow shoulders ; the upper coiffure bulged out to such a degree that it almost surpassed the head itself in extent ; the eyes were indicated by short slits and were separated by an inordinately long nose from an infinitesimally small mouth ; the soft robes hung loosely about figures of an almost unearthly thinness."

About the year 1800 these exaggerations were still further increased, so that the head was three times as long as broad, and the figure more than eight times longer than the head. Most of his large head-studies date at this period.

His triptyches, however, of which he produced a large number, do not show these exaggerations, except that the figures are very tall and quite unlike any real Japanese woman. This trait, however, was common to practically all artists who portrayed the human figure, and was more or less an artistic convention as an expression of idealism. It would also appear that the size of a figure was governed largely by its importance in the general composition as the central figure of the design, rather than in proportion to its surroundings. Thus, in a print belonging to the writer by Kiyomine, representing three famous tea-house beauties on parade with their three *kamuro* or attendants, the three beauties are strapping young amazons of six foot six, while their attendants barely reach their waists.

Utamaro's signature is one of the first with which a collector will become acquainted, as it is one of the easiest to recognise. His early work can

Marionette Lovers being worked above a screen by a man and woman behind it.

[Key: 1 Uta 2 maro (early form) 3 *fudè* (with brush) 4 Publisher: Moriji]

ce p. 50.]

be distinguished from his later by the form of the signature, apart from the differences in the drawing of the figures already noted. In the former it is compact and more carefully written ; in the latter it tends to sprawl, is written larger, and the character for the first half of the name " Uta," is finished off with a long tail which does not appear in his early work. The print illustrated at page 50 shows his early form of signature. It is his later straggling form which is found on prints done by his pupils and imitators (*vide* print by Utamaro II. illustrated at page 52*). Toyokuni is said to have forged some of Utamaro's prints, signature and all.

Owing to the manner in which his prints were forged by contemporaries, Utamaro sometimes signed himself " Shomei Utamaro," that is, the real Utamaro, thus signifying particular approval of his

* The outline block of the print by Utamaro II. here illustrated may be seen in the Department of Illustration and Design at the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington. On comparing it with this print, which is an early impression, it will be noticed that the original artist's signature has been erased and re-cut on the opposite edge, while the *kiwamé* seal and publisher's mark have been taken out altogether, owing, no doubt, to their having become worn. The wistaria does not appear, and was probably cut on a separate block for use on other prints of the same series, though only this one has come under observation. A set of modern blocks, with proofs therefrom by a Japanese printer, has been cut from pulls taken from the outline block, in order to show the various stages in printing the colours.

own work; but prints with this form of signature are very rare.

Utamaro is best known by his figure studies of women, but he also drew landscapes, bird, animal, and flower studies, and a large number of book-illustrations.

He had numerous pupils and followers, who may be classed as the Toriyama school, taking the name from Toriyama Sekiyen, the father and teacher of Utamaro.

At his death in 1806, his pupil, Koikawa Shuncho, married his widow, an apparently not uncommon proceeding with pupils—Gosotei Toyokuni, for example—and assumed the name of his great master till 1820, when he changed it to Tetsugoro.

Many prints signed Utamaro are undoubtedly the work of this second Utamaro, and it is sometimes difficult to say which of them. Generally, however, the difference in the drawing of the figure and face affords the clue, and sometimes the prints are seal-dated, which determines their origin at once.

Another, and perhaps the best pupil and real successor to Utamaro, was SHIKIMARO (*fl.* 1790-1805), whose work is graceful and with pleasant colour-

A Geisha making her salutation, and her maid standing behind holding her *samisen* box. (*c.* 1808.)

Key: 1 Uta — 2 maro — 3 *fudè* (with brush) — 4 Publisher: Moriji — 5 Kiwamè seal: ('perfect')

Face p. 52.]

ing. Mention should also be made of KIKUMARO (*fl.* 1789-1829), who, after about 1795, changed his name to Tsukimaro. Other pupils may be identified by the suffix "maro" to their names.

As mentioned in a former chapter, forgeries, imitations, and modern reprints of Utamaro's work are rather common, particularly of some of his famous and rare triptyches. Thanks to his large output, genuine Utamaro prints are not very difficult to obtain, but of course examples of his earlier and better work are less readily procured than his later output. It is not easy, however, to find copies in first-class condition, the paper being often discoloured by exposure to the fumes of charcoal, which, of course, considerably reduces their value. This was due to their having been at one time used to decorate screens and paper partitions in Japanese houses.

Utamaro prints are worth from two to three or five pounds upwards, according to their importance and condition, till we reach his fine triptyches at £20 or £30, up to £100 for a fine copy of a very rare example, while £300 has been asked for a well-preserved set of his famous "silkworm" print complete in twelve sheets. This print represents the whole pro-

cess of the production of silk, from the raising of the silkworm to weaving the material, and is one of his prints which has been extensively forged or reproduced. One of the prints of this set is reproduced in colours in Von Seidlitz's "History of Japanese Prints," at page 126, from a copy in the British Museum.

Another famous and very rare print is a triptych representing women diving for shell-fish, which has also been reproduced.

Mention should also be made of his triptych representing the production of colour-prints by women, showing the various stages, from the first design to the finished print. Kunisada has closely copied this triptych.

Toriyama Sekiyen trained one other artist of the first rank, Yeishōsai Chōki, also known as Shiko, a name which he adopted towards the end of his career. Opinions appear to differ, however, on this point, though the balance seems to be in favour of Chōki being the earlier name of this artist. This opinion is borne out by the fact that work so signed is more after the style of Kiyonaga, while that signed Shiko more closely follows Utamaro, whose style

Yeishōsai Chōki (*w.* 1785-1805).

1
5

Procession of Yoshiwara beauties at New Year Festival; *one sheet of a triptych.*

[Key: 1 Cho (Naga) 2 ki (yoshi) 3 *gwa* (drew) 4 Kiwamè seal ('perfect') 5 Publisher: Tsuta-ya]

ace p. 54.]

did not come into vogue till after the retirement of Kiyonaga from the world of art about 1795, though the latter outlived Utamaro by nine years. Owing to this difference of style it was at one time thought that Chōki and Shiko were two different artists, though practically little or nothing is known of him except what we can gather from his prints, but these are very rare. He worked between the years 1785 and 1805. The signature Chōki may also be read Naga-yoshi, but the former is the name by which he is more generally known, though continental collectors appear to prefer the latter transcription.

CHAPTER V

ARTISTS OF THE UKIYOYE SCHOOL (*Continued*)

UTAMARO'S principal rival, particularly towards the end of his (Utamaro's) career, was TOYOKUNI (1769-1825), the chief pupil of Toyoharu. Toyokuni's early work consists mostly of studies of women, thus following the style of Utamaro. After the death of the latter he turned his attention to actors, and at one time was looked upon as *the* actor painter of Japan. His best work is considered his series of actor-portraits in *hoso-ye* form issued about 1800, but all his early work is good. After Utamaro's death, however, he confined himself to large actor-portraits almost entirely, and from this date his work began to deteriorate, his actors eventually becoming little better than caricatures, with their exaggerated features, squint-eyed, long-nosed, and wry-mouthed, exaggerations which were carried to repulsiveness by his pupil, Kunisada.

Toyokuni's output was prolific ; but this designa-

tion chiefly applies to his later work, of which much survives to-day. His early work is comparatively rare, and may be distinguished, apart from the better quality of the work both in drawing and colouring, by the signature being more carefully written, and in smaller characters.

Attention has already been drawn to the various artists following Toyokuni who adopted his name, and the way in which they may be distinguished both from one another and from Toyokuni himself.

Toyokuni's prints being fairly numerous, prices range from 15 to 20 shillings or so for relatively unimportant single sheets, to £3 or £5 for good examples of his early work, up to £30 and £50 for particularly fine triptyches. A rare pentaptych, or five-sheet print will, perhaps, be worth £80.

Toyohiro (1773-1828) was a fellow-pupil of Toyokuni. His chief claim to fame lies in his having trained the great Hiroshige; as an artist he was far outdistanced in popularity by the much more productive Toyokuni. While the latter devoted himself to actors, Toyohiro followed his master's preference for landscapes; but, owing to his comparatively small output, his prints are rare.

Another contemporary with Utamaro, and an artist whose work is of charming delicacy and refinement, was Hosoda Yeishi, who worked between the years 1780 and 1810. He is another of the few instances known of a print-designer not being of the artisan class, Yeishi being originally a Samurai who first studied painting in the aristocratic Kano school, with the result that his prints are more delicate and refined than were those of most contemporary and later Ukiyoye artists. His figures, also, are more natural than those of Utamaro, and do not exhibit the latter's exaggerations.

Many of his prints have a beautiful pale yellow background, and the collector is lucky who comes across one of these prints to-day in all its pristine loveliness. Unfortunately, this pale yellow is liable to fade with age, unless in the past it has been carefully kept from over-exposure to the light.

The subjects he portrayed are beautifully-attired ladies in various light occupations.

He also did a series of small, almost square prints about the same size as a surimono, also with a pale yellow background, depicting the popular courtesans of the day, on parade with their attendants. He

Hosoda YEISHI (*w.* 1780-1800).

A Lady pointing with her fan to a small inset landscape scene; *medium size print.*

Key: 1 Yei 2 shi 3 *zue* (picture) 4 Kiwamè seal ('perfect') 5 Publisher: Yeijudo of Yedo.

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likewise designed some remarkably fine triptyches, examples of which number amongst a collector's greatest print treasures and in consequence are rarely in the market. Such, needless to say, fetch very high prices.

Lesser prints by Yeishi fetch about the same price as similar examples by Utamaro, but as his output was considerably less—at least far fewer are in existence to-day—the average of his better prints is higher. But even a relatively minor print by Yeishi has so much charm that an opportunity to obtain an example should not be missed.

Modern reproductions of prints by Yeishi are very common, and the collector should carefully examine all examples bearing his signature.

Yeishi was the founder of a sub-school, named after his family name the Hosoda school, and had several pupils, of whom the most important were Yeisho, Yeisui, Yeishin, and Yeiri, all of whose work is rarer, in some instances considerably rarer, than that of Yeishi himself. Hosoda Yeiri must not be confused with Rekisentei Yeiri, who worked about 1810. He sometimes signed himself "Yeiri, pupil of Yeishi," to avoid this confusion.

YEIZAN (Kikugawa) has already been referred to as a rival and imitator of Utamaro. He was a pupil at first of his father, Kano Yeiji, and worked as a colour-print artist between the years 1804 and 1829. His large heads, after the style of Utamaro, are very fine, but his later work, when he took to copying Kunisada's full-length figures of courtesans, is not so good. They tend to become exaggerated, as Kunisada's were, and overloaded with design, and are the work of an artist who became a pure copyist, without any originality of his own to work upon, one print being very like another.

Owing, however, to the fact that he ceased designing colour-prints about 1829, after which date he turned his attention to literature and the illustrating of books, his prints never exhibit the crude colouring of Kunisada's later work. Taken all round, however, Yeizan deserves a higher place amongst the Ukiyoye artists than he is generally given. He may have followed other artists, and had little originality of his own, but his early designs are boldly drawn and graceful, while the colours are well chosen.

Yeizan's work is fairly easily obtained, and in good condition, as he produced a large number of

Kikugawa YEIZAN (*w.* 1800-1829).

Full length portrait of a Geisha: inset a playing card with portrait of the poetess, Sei-sho-nagon. (*Very early work*).

[Key: 1 Yei, 2 zan (earliest form); 3 *fudè* (with brush); 4 (?) Date cypher: (?) c. 1800; 5 Publisher: Yeza-kiya]

prints. Many of them are seal-dated, and any up to 1810 are good; but his late work (*c.* 1820-1829) follows too much the exaggerated and over-dressed figures of Kunisada, though he avoids the latter's glaring colours.

Another artist of this period, somewhat similar in name, is Keisai YEISEN (1789-1848). Von Seidlitz wrongly states him to be a pupil of Yeizan, owing no doubt to the fact that the first syllable of both their names is "Yei." Yeisen, however, was a pupil of Hakukeisai, the last half of whose name he took for his first, Keisai. Also the styles, both in colour and design, of Yeizan and Yeisen differ too much for the latter to have been a pupil of the former. Again, Yeisen was a more original designer than Yeizan, and did both landscapes and figure studies, whereas Yeizan confined himself to the drawing of women, though he often used a landscape background in his triptyches. Yeisen's best work was done in landscape, being collaborator with Hiroshige for the series of "Sixty-nine Stations on the Kiso Road."

His masterpieces are two very fine *kakemono-ye* worthy to rank with similar masterpieces of Hokusai and Hiroshige; one a moonlight scene with a bridge

across a stream in the foreground, and behind high mountain-peaks—a fit companion to Hiroshige's "Monkey bridge" *kakemono-ye*. This print is exceedingly rare, a very fine copy changing hands in the Happer sale for £84. The other is a design of a carp, the Japanese emblem of perseverance, leaping up a waterfall, better known than the former as being less rare, and worth about £8 to £10, according to its condition. Other good prints by him in landscape are his series of waterfalls in imitation of the set by Hokusai. These also are rare. His figure studies, which are fairly numerous and not difficult to obtain, are the output of his later years. The collector should not miss the opportunity of picking up good copies of his blue prints, in which the whole design is printed in blue; their effect is very pleasing, even though the actual drawing may not be of a very high order.

He also designed some good surimono. He signs himself in full, Keisai Yeisen, or Yeisen only, or Keisai only. In the latter case he should not be confused with Keis*u*, a designer of surimono and pupil of Hokkei, whose full name is Kiko Keisu.

KIYOMINE (1786-1868) was the fifth and prac-

Blue Print: Portrait of Hana-mura-saki of Tama-ya; inset view of Tama-chi, one of the "Eight Views of Northern District" (of Yedo), i.e., the Yoshiwara.

[Key: 1 Kei 2 sai 3 Yei 4 sen 5 *gwa* (drew) 6 Kiwamè seal: ('perfect') 7 Publisher: Tsuta-ya

ace p. 62.]

tically the last master of the Torii school. He was a pupil of the great Kiyonaga, and his prints are rather rare, and are characterised by their gracefulness and pleasant colouring.

The print by him here reproduced (Plate 15) is remarkable in that the outlines of the face, hand, and wrist are printed in pink, the colour of the *saké* cup, and is called *nikuzuri*, meaning "flesh-colour." Such printing is extremely rare, and is found only in a few prints by Kiyomine and Utamaro.

We now come to the numerous pupils and followers of Toyokuni, forming the Utagawa school. Of this school, KUNISADA (1785-1865) is by far the best known, on account of his enormous productivity, his total output probably equalling, if it did not exceed, that of any two other artists combined. It even exceeded the output of Hiroshige, prolific as he was. In fact, so prodigious was the number of his prints towards the end of his career, that Kunisada did no more than the first outline drawing of a print, leaving his pupils to carry out the colour-scheme, and exercising no supervision over his printers. The result is seen in a complexity of design, meaningless elaboration of detail, crudeness

of colouring, and often bad register in printing which is so characteristic of a large number of prints bearing his signature, particularly in those signed with his later name of Toyokuni. In fact, his innumerable actor-portraits of this period are little better than caricatures, with all the later eccentricities and exaggerations of his master, Toyokuni, magnified tenfold, and further intensified by the shrieking colours.

The only work of Kunisada really worth the collector's attention are his early landscapes, but unfortunately these are very rare. A good, but uncommon, set of half-block-size prints by him is a series of Tokaido views copied, in some cases, almost line for line from Hiroshige's Tokaido series published by Hōyeido, with a large figure of a geisha in the foreground. Some of these are signed "To order, Kunisada," as if to throw the blame for his plagiarism of Hiroshige's work upon his publisher, Sanoki.

His one really fine design in figure studies is his portrait of Hiroshige, to which reference has been made; and speaking generally, and bearing in mind the very low average of his work as an artist in such

Woman holding out a *sakè* cup; one of a series: "Beautiful Women and Yedo Brocades compared."

[Key: 1 Kiyo 2 minè 3 *fudè* (with brush) 4 Publisher: Yeijudo of Yedo]

Face p. 64.]

prints by him as are usually met with, a collector might do worse than ignore Kunisada altogether.

His memorial portrait of Hiroshige was done in the year of the latter's death (1858), and on it is a long and very interesting inscription in which occurs the following passage: "At the present time Hiroshige, Kunisada, and Kuniyoshi are considered the three great masters of Ukiyoye; no others equal them: Hiroshige was especially noted for landscape."

Omitting Hiroshige, who stood apart in a class by himself, this passage is a striking commentary on the state to which the art of the colour-print artist had fallen by the middle of the last century. If Kunisada was considered far and away one of the chief artists of his time—at a date, too, when he was almost at his worst in his ordinary work—it only proves how terrible the rest must have been.

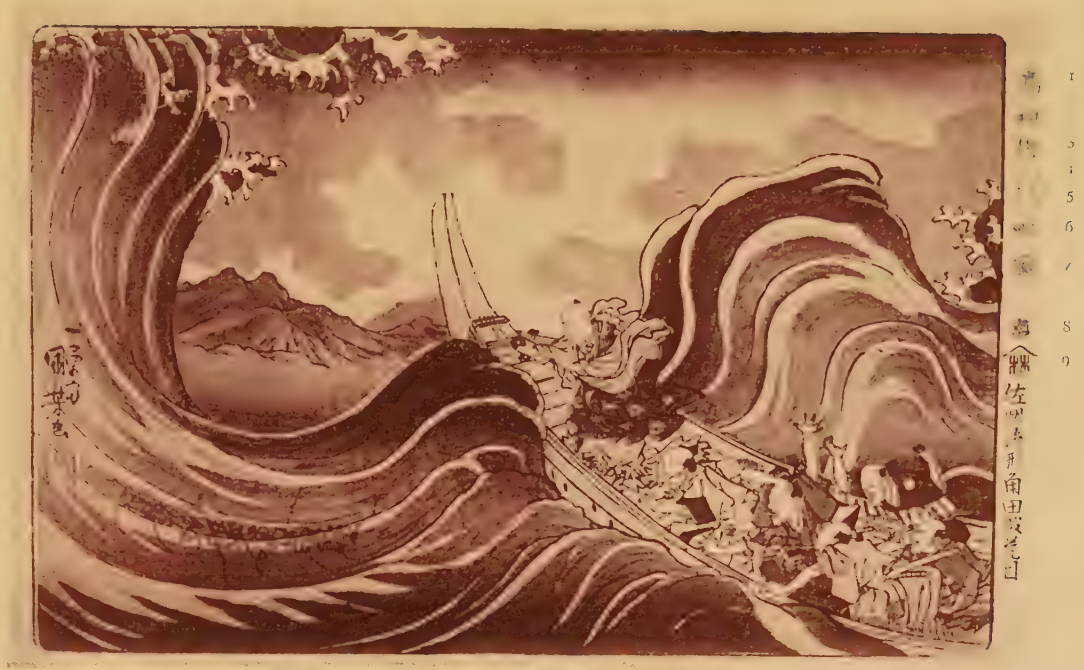
Kunisada often collaborated with Hiroshige in the design of triptyches, in which the landscape is done by the latter and the large figures in the foreground by Kunisada. Or again, the left and right panels will be the work of one artist and the centre panel that of the other.

Kunisada, solely by reason of the quantity of his

work, was considered the head of Toyokuni's school, as is shown by his eventually appropriating to himself his teacher's name; but KUNIYOSHI (1798-1861) was easily the better artist. He did some good landscapes, many deserving to rank with those of Hiroshige, while his figure studies are strongly drawn, often with a humorous touch. His colours, though sometimes weak, are rarely the crude and hideous colours of Kunisada, while he frequently makes a very effective use of masses of black.

A very fine, but at the same time rare, set of prints by Kuniyoshi depicts incidents from the life of the priest Nichiren, *Koso go Ichidai Rya-ku zu ye* ("An Abridged Biography of Koso, illustrated") (*vide* ch. VII for details) in ten scenes. Von Seidlitz quotes one scene—Nichiren on a pilgrimage in the snow, the best print of this series—as a single print, being apparently unaware that it forms one of a set; the set, at least, is not mentioned by him amongst Kuniyoshi's works.

Another celebrated series is his set of scenes depicting the twenty-four paragons of filial piety, which are remarkable for their curious application of European pictorial ideas to a Chinese subject,



Nichiren quelling a storm while on a voyage to the Isle of Sado.

[Key: 1 Ko, 2 so, 3 go, 4 Ichi, 5 dai, 6 Rya-ku, 7 Zu-ye, 8 Kiwamè seal: ('perfect'), 9 Publisher: Iseya Rihei, 10 Ichi, 11 yu, 12 sai, 13 Kuni, 14 yoshi, 15 *gwa* (drew)]

Face p. 66.]

'*Plate No. 16*

but which detracts from them as works of art. Yet another famous set is his forty-seven scenes from the drama "Chushingura," the largest set in which this play has been depicted. Generally it is portrayed in eleven, twelve, and sometimes sixteen scenes. Kunisada has left a set in eleven triptyches.

None of the above series are at all common, but examples of Kuniyoshi's prints are not difficult to pick up.

Toyokuni's other pupils are mostly too unimportant to be mentioned individually. Four, however, who died before the art of the colour-printer was so far advanced towards decay, and before crude aniline colours became the custom, deserve mention, because their work is, for these reasons, superior to their contemporaries :

KUNIMASA I. (1772-1810), whose portraits of actors are very good, and who had a reputation even higher than that of his master. His prints are very uncommon.

KUNINAGA, who died about 1810.

KUNINAO (*w.* 1820), who first studied art in the Chinese School, afterwards becoming a pupil of Toyokuni. His prints are not common, and his

figure studies are notable for their grace and elegance.

KUNIYASU (1800-1830), whose prints are also uncommon and are much above the average of his fellow-pupils, his colours being well chosen. He also designed surimono. His prints comprise both figure studies, landscapes, and seascapes. (*See* Plate 17.)

The numerous followers of Kunisada and Kuniyoshi need not detain us long. Those of the former, together with pupils of Hokusai, formed what is known as the Osaka school, a school which came into existence at Osaka about 1825, and is mainly notable for the production of surimono. Previous to this date, the art of the colour-printer was solely confined to Yedo, where it originally started.

SADAHIDE (*c.* 1840), one of the best of Kunisada's pupils, worked in landscapes in the style of Hiroshige. His prints are good of their kind, considering the lateness of the period at which he worked.

SADAMASU (*w.* 1830 to 1850) also worked in the style of Hiroshige. His work is not common and is distinctly above the average of the period. A good fan print by him is illustrated at Plate 2.

HASEGAWA SADANOBU (*c.* 1840) designed both actor prints and landscapes, but in the case of the

Gathering Shells at Low Tide.

[Key: 1 Kuni 2 yasu 3 *fudè* (with brush) 4 Kiwamè seal: ('perfect') 5 Publisher: Yamahei]

Face p. 68.

[*Plate No. 17.*

latter appears to have been not satisfied with merely following the style of Hiroshige, but needs must copy him line for line. For example, a view by him of Lake Biwa, with wild geese alighting on the water, is practically a reproduction of the same scene in a half-block set of Lake Biwa views by Hiroshige. This scene is illustrated in the catalogue of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Kuniyoshi's pupils continued to work at Yedo. Of these YOSHITORA (*w.* 1850) was, perhaps, one of the best, his colours being as a rule less offensive than is generally the case with prints of this date. He designed figure studies, landscapes, and battle-scenes.

YOSHITOSHI (*w.* 1860-1890) was another pupil who is worth mention as being above the general run of contemporary artists.

The pupils of Kunisada may be recognised by the adoption of the second half of their master's name, "sada," as the first of their own, *e.g.*, Sada-hide, Sada-nobu; though some adopted the first part, "Kuni," *e.g.*, Kuni-chika, Kuni-hisa, Kuni-mori, and others. Kunimori at first signed himself Horai

(or Kochoyen) Harumasu, his signature of Kunimori being a later one adopted on his joining the school of Kunisada. In the same way Kuniyoshi's pupils all begin their names with the prefix Yoshi, *e.g.*, Yoshi-tora, Yoshi-kuni, Yoshi-kazu.

Two independent artists remain to be mentioned before turning to the great landscape artists, Hokusai and Hiroshige, and their pupils. Shojo KIOSAI (1831-1889), whose bird studies are remarkable, may be reckoned as the last of the old school of print designers of the first rank. Had he lived earlier, before the advent of aniline colours, his prints, which are not common, would have been esteemed even higher; but his work unfortunately suffers from the inferior colours used.

The other artist is SUGAKUDO, who worked about 1845, and who has designed an excellent series of bird and flower studies in forty-eight plates, which number amongst a collector's favourite examples. The print most coveted by collectors in this series is the drawing of a large red parrot, being Number 10 in the series, which is entitled *Sho Utsushi Shi-ju hachi* (48) *Taka:* "Exact Representations of Forty-eight Hawks" (*i.e.*, birds).

Moor-hen and White Wistaria; from the series "Exact Likenesses of Forty-eight Birds."

[Key: 1 Su 2 gaku 3 do 4 Seal: Sugaku 5 Date-seal: Sheep year (1859) 6 Series No. (10+4=14) 7 Publisher: Kōyeido 8 Title of series]

CHAPTER VI

THE LANDSCAPE ARTISTS, HOKUSAI AND HIROSHIGE, AND THEIR PUPILS

HOKUSAI (1760-1849) is generally classed as a landscape artist, as his chief work was done in this field, though he drew almost everything that could be drawn. He lived entirely for his work and became the master-artist of Japan, dying at the age of eighty-nine, after a life of incessant work and almost continuous poverty, with the regret upon his lips that he had not been granted a larger spell of life to devote to his idol art.

No artist adopted so many artistic names with which to bewilder the collector of the present day during his career as Hokusai.

As a pupil of Shunsho, at the age of nineteen, he used the name Shunro, but he left Shunsho's studio (because, it is hinted, Shunsho found his pupil too good, and was obliged to take only second

place), and started for himself as an independent artist.

Sori, Kako, Taito, I-itsu are some of the names he used in addition to that by which he is universally known, and as he sometimes passed them on to a pupil when himself adopting a new name, it is not always possible to say if a print signed Taito, for example, is by the master or the pupil of that name.

For instance, a well-known print signed Katsushika Taito, representing a carp swimming in a whirlpool, is by some authorities attributed to Hokusai, and by others to the pupil, but the latter has the more numerous supporters. Many of Hokusai's prints are signed "Hokusai mad-on-drawing" (*Gwakio jin Hokusai*), thus showing the fervour of his spirit.

Hokusai's masterpieces, by which we recognise him as one of the world's greatest artists, are the following series:

"The Imagery of the Poets," a series of ten large vertical prints, issued about 1830. This series is very rare, particularly in a complete set.

"The Thirty-six Views of Fuji" (*Fugaku San-ju Rok'kei*), with the ten additional views, really forty-

No. 4 of the "Thirty-six Views of Fuji": Fuji seen through a large tub, the seams of which a man is caulking; *signed* Hokusai I-itsu.

Face p. 72.]

[*Plate No. 19.*

six views, full-size oblong. Some prints in this series are much rarer than others, and really good copies of any are not easy to procure, though poor and faded copies are fairly common of some of them. The three rarest and most coveted by collectors are "The Great Wave," "Fuji in Calm Weather," and "Fuji in a Thunderstorm," with lightning playing round its base. The first of these, "The Great Wave," has been described, more particularly by American collectors, as one of the world's greatest pictures; and certainly, even if this description is perhaps somewhat exaggerated, it is a wonderful composition, such as could only have emanated from the brain and hand of a great master. This series was issued between 1823 and 1829.

"The Hundred Poems explained by the Nurse" (1839). Of this series only twenty-seven prints are known to exist, and Hokusai never completed it. About fifteen original drawings, which were never used for producing prints from, are also known. Moderately rare.

"Travelling around the Waterfall Country," a set of eight vertical prints, about 1825; rare.

"Views of the Bridges of Various Provinces," a

set of eleven oblong prints, similar to the "Views of Fuji" series, about 1828; rare.

"Ryukyu Hakkei." Eight views of the Loochoo Islands, full-size, oblong, *c.* 1820; very rare.

Modern reproductions and reprints of all the foregoing series are met with, particularly his "Imagery of the Poets," "Waterfalls," and "Views of Fuji" series.

Besides the foregoing landscape scenes and innumerable single prints, Hokusai designed some very fine, and very rare, bird and flower studies, of which modern reproductions exist, many surimono, and a very large number of book illustrations. Amongst the latter may be mentioned his famous "Hundred Views of Fuji," and his "Mangwa" (sketches). It is computed that altogether he produced some thirty thousand drawings, and illustrated about five hundred books. (Von Seidlitz.)

Of Hokusai's pupils, of whom about fifteen to twenty are known, Totoya Hokkei (1780-1850) is considered the foremost, and excelled even his master in the design of surimono. He also illustrated books.

Another pupil famous for his surimono is Yash-

The "Horse-Washing Fall" at Yoshino; from the "Waterfalls" series, No. 4 (*first edition*).

Key: 1 Zen 2 Hoku 3 sai 4 I 5 itsu 6 *fudè* (with brush)
(characters *outside* label)
7 Kiwamè seal: ("perfect") 8 Publisher's seal: Yeijudo of Yedo

ima GAKUTEI (*w.* 1800-1840), who also designed a full set of very fine land- and seascape drawings, full size, oblong, for a book, "Views of Tempozan" (*Tempozan Shokei Ichiran, Osaka*, 1838). (Plate 22.) The complete book, text and illustrations, is exceedingly rare, while the illustrations singly, in sheets, are almost as rare. On these he signs himself Gogaku. These prints show clearly the influence of his teacher, Hokusai.

A third good designer of surimono is Yanagawa SHIGENOBU (1782-1832) the scapegoat son-in-law of Hokusai, whose daughter Omiyo he married. This Shigenobu must not be confused with a later Ichiry-usai Shigenobu, the pupil of Hiroshige, better known as the second Hiroshige, and a considerably less capable artist.

Shotei HOKUJU (*w.* 1800-1830) is remarkable for his curious landscapes done in a semi-European manner, known as *Rangwa* pictures, meaning literally Dutch pictures, as it was from the Dutch, the first Europeans allowed to trade with Japan, and then only under severe restrictions, that the idea of perspective as we understand it, was learnt by Japanes artists.

His mountains are drawn in a peculiar angular manner, almost cubist in effect, and his clouds are very cleverly rendered by means of *gauffrage*. The print by him here reproduced (Plate 23), showing the "tea-water" canal, Yedo, illustrates these characteristics very clearly, and European influence is further indicated by the shadows cast by the pedestrians on the bank, an effect also produced in a print by Hiroshige in his "Hundred Views of Yedo" series.

Shunkosai Hokushiu (*w.* 1808-1835) was another pupil of Hokusai, who designed figure studies, in which the dress is sometimes rendered in *gauffrage*, a method of heightening the effect of colour-printing generally confined to surimono. Hokushiu, however, employed it largely in his ordinary full-sized prints.

Ichiryusai Hiroshige (1797-1858) shares with Hokusai the reputation of being the foremost landscape artist of Japan. It is generally through his landscapes that the collector first becomes acquainted with Japanese colour-prints, and through which he is attracted to them. Hiroshige's prints more nearly approach our ideas of pictorial representation than those of any other artist of the Ukiyoye, with the exception, perhaps, though to a less extent, of

The "Eight Parts Bridge," province of Mikawa; from the "Views of Bridges in Various Provinces" series (*first edition*).

[Key: 1 Zen 2 Hoku 3 sai 4 I 5 itsu 6 *fudè* (with brush) 7 Kiwamè seal: ('perfect') 8 Publisher's seal: Yeijudo of Yedo]

Hokusai; yet at the same time he remains essentially Japanese.

Hiroshige gives us the effect of atmosphere and mist, sunrise and sunset, snow and rain, in his designs, which Hokusai, with his sharper and more vigorous outline, does not. The latter's scenes are full of that restless activity which reflects his own untiring energy, an energy which nothing could damp, while misfortune merely spurred him to greater effort.

Hiroshige's designs, on the other hand, are generally calm and peaceful. These divergent characteristics are well shown in Hokusai's "Great Wave," a picture contrasting the all-devouring force of nature and the littleness of man, and Hiroshige's "Autumn Moon on the Tama River," from his "Eight Environs of Yedo" series, considered one of his masterpieces in landscapes, a scene of infinite peace and quietude. Of like nature is his "Homing Geese at Katada," one of his "Eight Views of Lake Biwa" series, representing a flock of geese flying to rest at twilight.

It is not easy to compare, artistically, the work of these two masters. Much of Hiroshige's work is of a later period than that of Hokusai. Hiroshige's

earliest work is assigned to the year 1820; Hokusai had produced prints before 1800. The entirely different colour-schemes employed also render it difficult to make comparisons; towards the end of his career the work of Hiroshige suffers much by reason of the poor quality of the colours used by his printers. His best work, namely, his Tokaido series of full-sized oblong landscape views, is equal to anything Hokusai produced; but on the whole it must be said that the latter's work shows a much higher average quality throughout, whereas that of Hiroshige varies to a considerable extent, many of his later series containing some very inferior designs, apart from those obviously the work of his pupil.

Though this falling-off was no doubt due to increasing age, yet in the case of Hokusai, who lived very nearly half as long again as Hiroshige, his work shows practically no traces of advancing years. As he himself says, he did not expect to become a really great artist till he had reached the age of eighty, while he was dissatisfied with everything which he had produced prior to his seventieth year.

Fenollosa, one of the leading authorities on the

Ships entering Tempozan Harbour; illustration to a book, "Views of Tempozan," published at Osaka (1838).

[Key: 1 Go 2 gaku 3 Wakai seal (the name of a collector who so stamped the prints in his collection)]

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[*Plate No. 22.*

artists of the Ukiyoye, while he classes Hokusai in the first rank, puts Hiroshige in the third only, though his classification refers to them as painters, while he does not specifically class them as colour-print designers.

Opinions, of course, differ as to the order of merit of the Ukiyoye artists. Many collectors would put both Hokusai and Hiroshige in the first rank. The writer is inclined to steer a middle course and place Hokusai in the first rank, as practically all are agreed but Hiroshige in the second.

Again, the fact that the artist only supplied the design, which was destroyed on cutting the outline, or key-block, and gave instructions as to the colours to be employed, somewhat modifies the answer to the question, "Is the work of one artist better, or of greater value, than that of another?" as the artist is almost entirely at the mercy of his engraver and printer, upon whose combined skill the excellence of the finished print depends. Added to this, there must be taken into account the fact that the same engraver and printer might be employed upon the designs of more than one artist, in just the same way that a printer does not confine himself to producing

the books of only one writer. It is to be regretted that the engravers of these prints are almost totally lost in oblivion, and that nothing is known of them, and only a comparatively few prints bear their mark, as it is due to them that the most beautiful pictorial art in the world came into being, or at least in such a form that it could be enjoyed by thousands where a single painting is but the delight of a select few.

A print is associated *only* with the artist whose signature it bears, or whose work it is known to be, or, in doubtful cases, to whom it is attributed. Yet the excellence of the print, and, in consequence, the reputation of the designer, rested with the engraver and printer. As pointed out above, much of Hiroshige's later work suffered purely from this cause, while his reputation has been further endangered by the very numerous impressions of his prints in existence to-day, which were printed after his death, over which, therefore, he had no control, and in which the printing is careless, while of the colours the least said the better.

In the writer's opinion, since these prints are (or should be) collected for their æsthetic charm,

View of the Tea-water Canal, Yedo.

[Key: 1 Sho 2 tei 3 Hoku 4 ju 5 *gwa* (drew) 6 Kiwamè seal: ('perfect') 7 Publisher: Yamamoto Heikichi.

Face p. 80.

[*Plate No. 23.*

the standard to be aimed at is one in which subject and artistic merit come first.

The artist's signature is not by itself sufficient to satisfy the discriminating collector, whose chief desire is to possess beautiful examples of these prints. Beauty of drawing, harmony of colour-scheme, and all those qualities which appeal to his artistic sense should form the chief consideration.

Besides landscape, Hiroshige produced some charming flower-and-bird (*kwa-cho*) studies, and also a series of fishes. The former are upright panels of various sizes ranging from 15 in. by 7 in. to a very narrow form, 3 in. wide, known as *tanjaku*, this being the name given to the narrow slips upon which poems were inscribed. The fish series, which is in two sets of ten prints each, are full-size oblong sheets. One set is signed with the artist's full name, Ichiryusai Hiroshige (publisher Yeijudo) and the other Hiroshige only.

The collector should beware of late issues and reprints of this fish series (first editions of which are not common) which do not carry the publisher's seal, nor, sometimes, the artist's signature.

Amongst Hiroshige's best work must be numbered

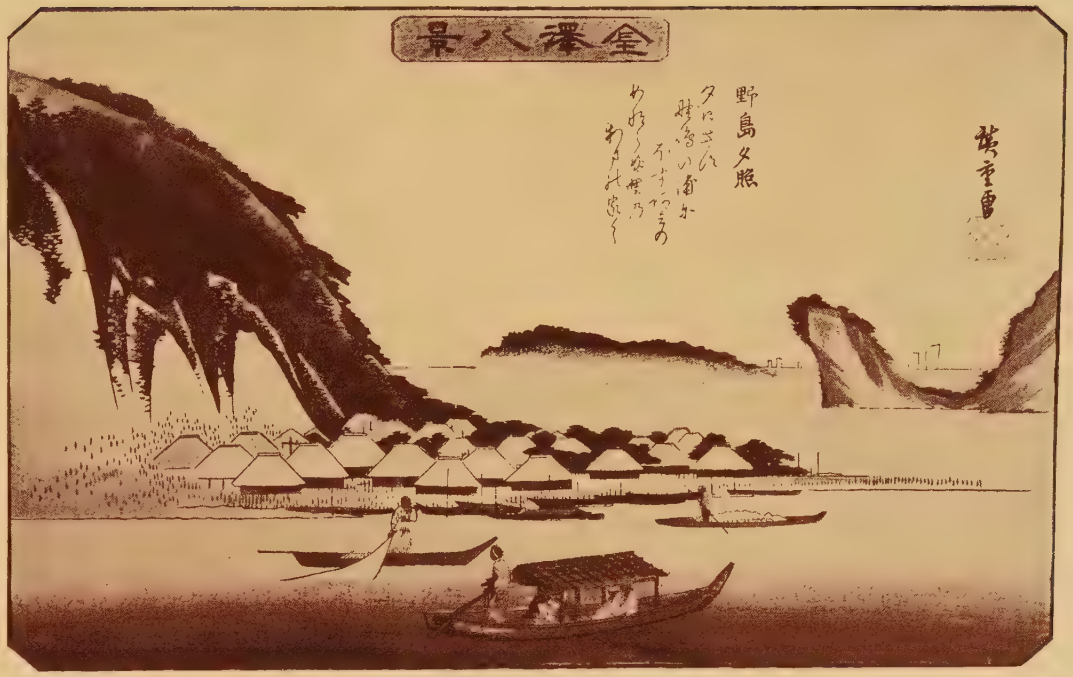
his various series of *Hakkei* or "Eight Views," which are: *Omi Hakkei* ("Eight Views of Omi," the province in which Lake Biwa is situated), generally known as the Eight Views of Lake Biwa; rare. *Yedo Kinko Hakkei* ("Eight Views of the Environs of Yedo"); very rare and particularly fine. *Kanazawa Hakkei* ("Eight Views of [the inlet of] Kanazawa"); rare.

The theme of all these eight views is the same throughout, and their origin is described in the chapter dealing with the subjects of illustration. Two other, also rare, series of his are a set of ten views of Osaka, *Naniwa Meisho*, Naniwa being a poetic name for Osaka; and another ten views of Kyoto, *Kyoto Meisho*. All the foregoing are oblong in shape.

Many of Hiroshige's landscape series were republished in a smaller form, half or quarter-block, in panels of various sizes and as fan-mounts.

Two large *kakemono-ye*, the "Monkey Bridge" and the "Snow Gorge of the Fuji River" are amongst Hiroshige's finest work, if not his chief masterpieces, and both are extremely rare, a copy of the former fetching £91 in the Happer sale.

Three other masterpieces are three triptyches: a



Sunset at No-jima; one of a series "Eight Views of Kanazawa."

Key: 1 Hiro — 2 shigè — middle period; 3 *gwa* (drew); 4 seal: Ichiryusai; 5 Kana; 6 zawa; 7 Hachi — 8 kei (view) — pronounce Hak'kei

Face p. 82.

Plate No. 21.

snow-scene on the Kiso mountains; View of Kanazawa in moonlight; and the Awa no Naruto Rapids. Modern reproductions of all the foregoing are met with, sometimes so well produced as to be difficult of detection.

Hiroshige's principal work in landscape is his "Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido" (*c.* 1830), a complete set of fifty-five views, with certain plates afterwards redrawn showing variations in outline and colour. Others, also, while they are found only in the one drawing or state, may vary in colour-scheme. In the same way Hokusai's "Views of Fuji" series is found in several different colour arrangements, probably due to the artist having left this point to his publisher to settle according to the fancy of his customers. The variation of design may have been due to a greater demand for certain views than for others, whereby the blocks became worn through much use, necessitating a new block cut from a fresh design, which gave the artist an opportunity of indulging his fancy. Such variations are very interesting.

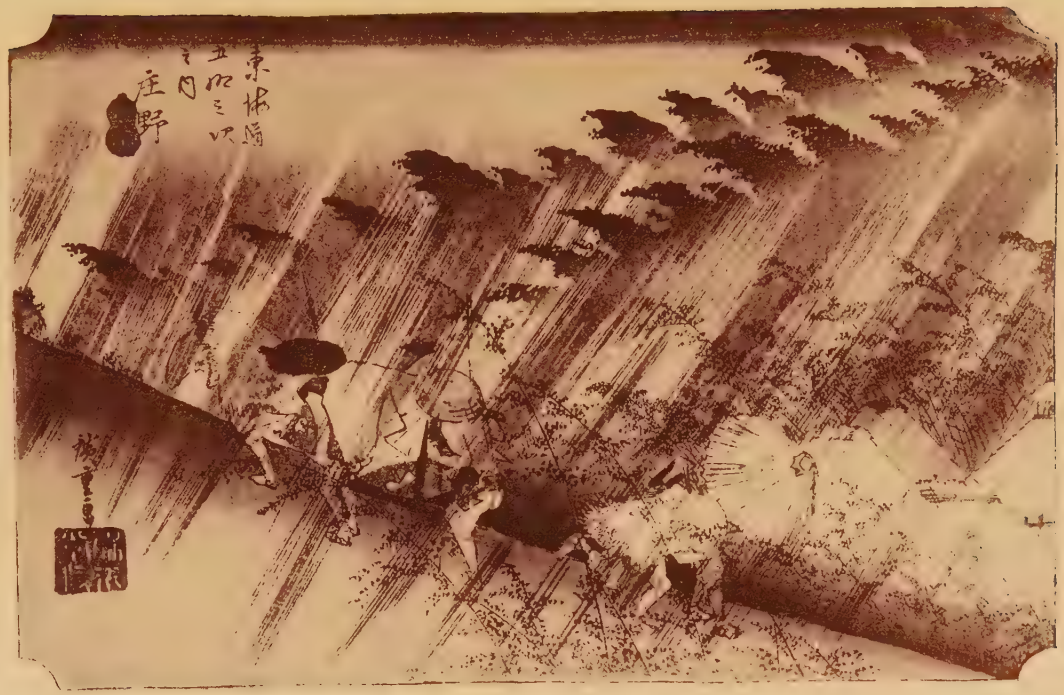
It has also been suggested that these variations are due to the original blocks having been destroyed

by fire, as Yedo, in common with other cities and towns in Japan in those days, suffered much by this agency.

"Station No. 6, Totsuka," is found in two different states. In this scene the variations are more pronounced than is usually the case. Thus, in the first issue, the tea-house is open and the man is dismounting from his horse ; in the later issue, the house is boarded up for the night, and the man is mounting. Other minor differences also appear.

"Station 10, Odawara" (fording the Sakawa River), is found in four different versions, the number of figures on the near shore differing in three of them, while in the fourth the outline of the hills is changed.

In other plates the difference is sometimes confined to the omission of certain lettering, the design being otherwise the same, thus probably showing that only some of the characters became worn and were taken out. This is the case with the well-known Shono rain-scene, Station 46, in which the characters on the umbrella disappear in the second issue, a change which is generally considered an improvement. This plate is here illustrated.



Rain-storm at Shono on the Tokaido. (*Second issue without inscription on umbrella*)

Key
early form
4 Publisher's seal: Hōyeido
5 Title of series: To kai do Go ju san Tsugi (53)
6 Name of Station (next seal)

The above remarks refer to the Tokaido set issued by the publisher Hoyeido. There is also a second set, issued about ten years later, by another publisher, Marusei. The Hoyeido set is the better and more popular of the two, though the Marusei edition is rarer. It is in the former series that we find the masterpieces of the Tokaido views, *viz.*, The Rainstorm at Shono (46); the Wind-storm at Yokkaichi (44); and Snow at Kameyawa (47), where coolies are climbing a steep hill through snowdrifts.

The Marusei edition was issued in 1842 at the beginning of the so-called Prohibition period, when prints of actors and courtesans were forbidden by law, and consequently an increased demand for landscape designs arose, a demand Hiroshige was naturally called upon to meet. This issue may be distinguished from the Hoyeido series by having the title in a red frame or cartouch, while the figures introduced into the scene are smaller.

Both these editions are full-size oblong prints. A rather smaller set, medium size, was issued by Yesaki; a half-plate set by Tsuta-ya, and by Sanoki; and a quarter-plate set by Arida-ya. None of these small sets, however, are at all common, and the writer

has seen no examples of the last-named series, but a set appeared at the Happer sale.

Later in life Hiroshige issued another series of Tokaido views, full size, upright, in 1855, known as the upright Tokaido, to distinguish it from the foregoing series, and published by Tsuta-ya. Each print is dated Hare 7 (= 7th month, 1855). Many prints in this series, however, are by Hiroshige II. (*See* Plate 5.)

The Tokaido (*i.e.*, Eastern Road) was the name given to the great highway along the eastern coast from Yedo to Kyoto, and had fifty-three relay stations along its route. The alternative road lay across the mountains and was known as the Kisokaido (*i.e.*, mountain road), and had sixty-nine stations. In the series of Kisokaido views (oblong), Hiroshige had the collaboration of Yeisen, who produced twenty-three out of the complete set of seventy plates.

The best view in this series is generally considered Nagakubo Station by Hiroshige, which is found in two different states; but taken as a whole this set is in no way the equal of the Tokaido series published by Hoyeido.

Under the title *Toto* or *Yedo Meisho* (Yedo

Benkei Canal in Winter-time, Sakurada district of Yedo; one of a "Yedo Views" series.

[Key: 1 Aratamè seal: ('examined') 2 Date seal: Tempo Tiger 7 —7th month, 1842 3 Hiro 4 shigè 5 *gwa* (drew) 6 Publisher's seal: Arita ya]

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Views), he issued in various years a large number of series with different publishers.

In addition to the foregoing is the following series:

Honcho Meisho (Views of the Main Islands), oblong, of which fourteen are known; very rare.

Yedo Komyo Kaiseki Tsukushi ("Famous Tea-Houses of Yedo"), oblong, of which twenty-nine prints are known; rare.

Nihon Minato Tsukushi ("Famous Harbours of Japan"), oblong, a series of ten views; rare.

Meisho Yedo Hyakkei ("Hundred Views of Yedo"), full-size, upright, variously dated between the years 1856 and 1858—a series of 118 prints which vary very much in quality, only about a third of the total number being worthy of the description of masterpieces. Some of them are so inferior that they must be attributed to Hiroshige II. It is of this series, almost more than any other, that so many late impressions are met with which are practically valueless, and only early first edition copies should be collected. Late impressions are readily recognised by their inferior printing and terribly crude colours; also the colour-scheme may be entirely altered.

Rokoju yo shu Meisho zu ye ("Views of the Sixty-odd Provinces") (literally the more than sixty); a series of 69 full-size upright prints, variously dated between the years 1853 and 1856.

First edition copies may be identified by bearing the following seals on them: i., the engraver (Takè) alongside Hiroshige's signature (but not on all the prints of the series); ii., the date-seal; iii., the publisher (Heisukè); iv., two small circular inspector's (or censor's) seals, Watanabè and Yonehara, which also occur on a *Yedo Meisho* series known as the Yamadaya set (from the name of the publisher) issued during the years 1853 to 1858.

The view here reproduced, Lake Biwa, shows all these five seals, and is dated Ox 10 (= 10th month of the year Ox, Kayei period, *i.e.*, 1853). The cloud across the face of the moon only appears in first edition copies.

Fuji San ju Rok'kei ("Thirty-six Views of Fuji") full size, upright, each print dated Horse 4 (= 4th month, 1858), but issued in the sixth month, 1859, the year after Hiroshige's death. This series was his last work, but he did not live to complete it, some of the plates being designed by Hiroshige II.,

Ishiyama Temple by the shore of Lake Biwa; from the "Sixty-odd Provinces" series (*first edition*).

Key: 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Roku (6)	ju (10)	yo	shu	mei	sho	zu	ye
60							

9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Hiro	shigè	*gwa* (drew)	Engraver: Takè	Inspectors' seals	Date seal: Ox 10=1853	Publisher: Heisukè

publisher Tsuta-ya. Good copies of this series are amongst the best of the various upright series designed by Hiroshige, but such are comparatively rare, whereas poor impressions with crude colours are fairly numerous. (*See* Plate 6.)

Hiroshige illustrated the drama "Chushingura" (Loyal League) in various series comprising sixteen, twelve, or eleven scenes.

By far the best detailed information of the numerous series designed by Hiroshige is contained in the catalogue of the Happer collection sold at Sotheby's in June, 1909. No such collection of examples of Hiroshige's work has ever before appeared in the auction-room, and collectors are much indebted to Mr. Happer for the additional facts regarding Hiroshige which he has been instrumental in bringing to our knowledge, particularly in his clearing up the doubt which previously existed between Hiroshige I. and Hiroshige II.

Of Hiroshige's pupil, Utagawa (or Ichiyusai) SHIGENOBU (*w.* 1840-1868), afterwards Hiroshige II., little need be said. As a rule his work, which closely follows that of his master, is very inferior,

though at times it was of sufficient merit to favourably compare with it. Thanks to Mr. Happer's investigations in respect of the date-seals found on Hiroshige's prints after 1840, much confusion formerly existing between the two Hiroshiges has now been definitely cleared up, and prints formerly attributed to the pupil are now properly accorded to Hiroshige himself, though it is known he sometimes called in his pupil to assist him in completing some of his numerous series.

Owing to the difference in the signature, Hiroshige, appearing on the early oblong views (*e.g.*, Tokaido series) as compared with that on the later vertical series (*e.g.*, Hundred Yedo Views), it was at one time thought that the signature on the latter was the form in which the pupil wrote it, and consequently all vertical prints signed Hiroshige were attributed to Hiroshige II. Von Seidlitz, however, points out that this difference in form of signature is due to the change in the method of writing it, that is from the Japanese cursive to the Chinese square style, quite apart from the change naturally induced by increasing age. If the collector has an opportunity of studying a number of Hiroshige's prints covering his

Morning Mist at Zojoji Temple : Lady Pilgrims attracted by a passing fish-vendor ; one of a series "Thirty-six Views of Toto" (Yedo.)

[Key: 1 To 2 to 3 San (3) 4 ju (10) 5 Roku (6) 6 kei (view) pro. Rok'kei 7 Hiro 8 shigè 9 *gwa* (drew) 10 Date seal: cock year = 1861 11 Publisher: A-ēto of Yedo]

whole career, he will notice that the change is not abrupt, as anyone comparing only early and late work, without any intermediate examples, might think, but is progressive.

A good series by Hiroshige II. (*c.* 1860) is his *Toto San-ju Rok'kei* ("Thirty-six Views of Toto"), Toto being a poetic name for Yedo. One print at least in this series, "Morning Mist at Zojoji Temple," here illustrated, proves that, given good colouring and careful printing, he could turn out prints equal to his master's.

Another good series by him is an oblong *Toto Meisho* set, printed in blue with occasional red and purple introduced, issued by Sen-ichi, and dated Dog 3 = 1862. Published at a time when the use of more than three colours was forbidden on the ground of economy, it is remarkable for the purity and effectiveness of the blue, which atones for the somewhat crude drawing.

He also designed a series of a "Hundred Views of Various Provinces" after the style of his master's "Sixty-odd Provinces," but it is a very inferior production, both in design and colouring.

CHAPTER VII

SUBJECTS PORTRAYED BY THE UKIYOYE ARTISTS

GENERALLY speaking, the subjects portrayed can be divided into the following classes: (i.) Portraits of actors and theatrical scenes; (ii.) Portraits of courtesans and geishas; (iii.) Landscape; and (iv.) Illustrations of historical and legendary stories, mythical heroes, and the like. Prints combining both landscape views and portraits of courtesans or geishas are also found, though the connection between the landscape and portrait is often too slight or too subtle for the European to detect.

In the portraits of actors and women, and in fact in all figure and head studies, and sometimes even in small figures introduced into a landscape, it will be noticed that a fixed convention is adopted in drawing the face, which is invariably half-way between full-face and profile—a convention admirably adapted to portray all the features.

Another convention was that used to convey the sense of darkness at night time by means of a black or grey sky, by introducing a moon or lanterns into the picture ; while the picture itself is as clear as a scene in broad daylight, yet there is no incongruity about it, as might be expected.

The Japanese artist fully realised the limitations of the process of producing colour-prints ; to have attempted to secure realistic effects would have sacrificed the charming results of which the process was capable in a hopeless effort to attain others beyond it.

It will also be noticed that, with the exception of certain artists, such as Hiroshige, who evidently studied our laws of perspective and applied them to a limited extent, our method of rendering perspective is exactly reversed, thus following the Chinese canon of drawing. That is to say, parallel lines converge as they approach the spectator, and often no attempt is made to diminish the size of figures more remote.

In short, while European pictures attempt to compete with the reality and exactness to nature of a photograph, Japanese art, in common with all Oriental art, where it has kept itself free of foreign

nfluence, has never professed to do so, but is full of convention and symbolism. The Japanese colour-print must be approached from an entirely different point of view to that adopted when criticising Western art. We portray in our pictures, the Japanese suggest; and to the work of the artist the observer must bring his own share of mind and thought if he would see clearly the artist's meaning.

While we leave little or nothing to the imagination, a function allowed only to poetry, the Oriental artist appeals as much to this faculty as to the sense of beauty, so that his picture is more or less pure symbolism. It is this quality which contributes so largely to the charm of Japanese colour-prints, and affords relief to the somewhat dull and stereotyped methods of Western pictorial art.

Actors are generally represented singly or in pairs, as they appeared in some favourite part on the stage; sometimes the portrait is of the head only. The name of the actor is nearly always given on the print, and generally also the character he represents and the name of the play. Sometimes the name of the actor, when not otherwise given, can be identified by a crest (*mon*) on his costume. (*See* Plate 29.)

Kitagawa UTAMARO (1754-1806).

Act 8 from the "Chusingura": The Bridal Journey of Konami and her mother, Tonasè, represented by two actors in private life, To-jaku (stage name Hanshiro), and Ro-ko.

[Key: 1 Uta — 2 maro (middle period) — 3 *fudè* (with brush) — 4 Publisher: Omi-ya of Yedo — 5 Ro-ko — 6 To — 7 jaku]

Reference has been made to the grotesque attitudes and, to us, distorted features in which we find actors represented on prints. This is because the interpretation of a play in Japan depends to a much greater extent than with us upon attitudes and movements, whereas elocution plays a very secondary part. The various shades of passion and sentiment are expressed by the features and movements of the body rather than by the tongue. It is clear, therefore, that an artist, if so minded, could easily exaggerate the posings and facial expressions of an actor whom he was portraying, so that they seem to us little more than caricatures.

It is obvious, too, that such acting must have been very tiring to the performers, particularly when we remember that a play in Japan was not an affair of a couple of hours or so, as with us, but occupied a whole day, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. This fact may have been a reason why women did not act on the stage in Japan, though by an edict issued in the middle of the seventeenth century they were forbidden to take part in theatrical performances.

Of the numerous plays of Old Japan, by far the most popular—at least as a subject for illustration—

was the "Chushingura," or "Loyal League of Forty-seven Ronin." This play, which at the present time still holds a foremost place in Japan, is founded on an historical event which took place in the opening years of the eighteenth century, and describes how a certain daimyo, Yenya, was so persistently insulted by another daimyo (Moronao), his instructor in court etiquette, that he was compelled to draw his sword in the latter's palace, and attack him, though he only managed to inflict a slight wound. Such an offence was punishable by death, and Yenya was condemned to commit *seppuku* or self-immolation, even though he had acted under intense provocation.

By this act his retainers (*samurai*) were reduced to the status of *ronin*, or leaderless (literally "floating") men. Forty-six of these banded together under the leadership of Yenya's chief councillor, Yuranosukè, to avenge their lord by the death of the offending Moronao. After many hardships and wanderings, as they had to keep the greatest secrecy over their movements in order to throw Moronao off his guard, they eventually, on a winter's night when the country was wrapped in deep snow, broke into his castle, surprised the guard, and killed

Moronao. Finally they put an end to their own lives with all due formality, after leaving a record of the event. To this day the tombs of the forty-seven *ronin* at Sengakuji Temple, in Yedo, are held in the greatest veneration. In the same graveyard, under a more imposing tomb, lie the remains of their lord whose death they so dutifully avenged.

In order that no offence may be given to any living descendant of the two daimyos in the play of the Chushingura, the names are changed, and Yenya represents the daimyo Asano Takuni-no-kami, and Kira Kotsuke-no-sukè becomes Moronao. Also, as is often done when dramatising history, details are altered and more characters are introduced. Thus, for example, in a set of Chushingura prints by Hiroshige in the writer's possession, in the first scene the fatal quarrel is caused by Moronao forcing his unreciprocated attentions upon Yenya's wife, the lady Kowoyo, and Wakasa is depicted defending her. Again, in the actual story, Yuranosukè, the leader, divorces his wife in order to be more certain that his plans for vengeance may not miscarry; in the play it is another of the *ronin*, Gihei, who divorces his wife to prevent secrets leaking out. A

full account of the story of the "Forty-seven Ronin" will be found in the late Lord Redesdale's "Tales of Old Japan."

Most, if not all, of the chief artists of Ukiyoye have depicted the scenes of the Chushingura in one form or another. It occurs sometimes in twelve, and sometimes in sixteen scenes. Kuniyoshi has left a series of forty-seven scenes, corresponding to the number of the *ronin*, while Kunisada has designed a series of eleven triptyches. A complete set of scenes is also found as a large single sheet (*e.g.* a triptych). The characters in the play are sometimes represented on prints by women, though actually women did not appear on the stage in Japan; and the various scenes are travestied by scenes in every-day life, or are parodied by children and Yoshiwara beauties. Thus, in a set by Utamaro, the attack on Moronao in Act XI. is parodied by two men fighting in the kitchen of a house, one armed with a mop, and the other with a broom. In another set, also by Utamaro, the various scenes are compared with the amusements of children. Scene vi. from this set is here illustrated at Plate 30, in which a mother is fastening on her daughter's *obi* for the birthday

Act 6 from the "Chushingura" compared with Children's Amusements.

[Key: 1 Uta 2 maro (middle period) 3 *fudè* (with brush) 4 Publisher: Tsuru-ya]

festival, in comparison with O Karu changing round her *obi* to the front before being taken off to the Yoshiwara. Parodies on the play are found by other artists. Such pictures are called *Yeki-odai* or "brother-pictures," meaning in contrast or comparison.

Act VIII., from a Chushingura series by Utamaro, is illustrated at Plate 29, and represents the bridal journey of Konami and her mother, Tonasè, walking along the sea-shore while journeying to Yamashima to find Rikiya, son of Yuranosukè, to whom Konami is betrothed. The particular interest in this print lies in the fact that Utamaro, like Harunobu, never drew actors as such, so to overcome this prejudice he drew them in private life as ordinary mortals. The two actors in this scene, being actors of female parts on the stage, were always dressed as ladies. The actor representing Tonasè can be identified as Iwai Hanshiro by the *mon* or crest on his sleeve, but only the private name, Ro-ko, of the other is given.

Another popular play is "The Ghost of Sakura," which deals with a certain village headman named Sogoro who, with his wife, was put to death by crucifixion, while his three sons were beheaded, because

he had dared to present a memorial direct to the Shogun appealing against the unjust and oppressive taxation levied upon the villagers by their ruler, the lord Hotta Kotsukè no-sukè, of Sakura. The petition of Sogoro and his fellow village chiefs being refused by the chief councillor of Kotsukè, and being unable to approach Kotsukè himself, they had no other course open but to present it to the Shogun, Prince Iyemitsu, in person; and Sogoro, who undertook to carry this out, managed to throw the petition into the Shogun's *norimon* (litter) while he was on his way to the temple Uyeno. Sogoro was seized by the prince's escort and thrown into prison. Kotsukè then received the petition from the hands of the Shogun, and decided to punish Sogoro for his presumption, as above related.

Prayers to spare at least his wife and children, who were innocent, were unavailing, and before dying Sogoro swore their ghosts should torment the Hotta family in revenge for their murder. Two years later the wife of Kotsukè was seized with violent pains, and her room filled with the fearful shrieks of the ghosts of Sogoro and his wife, which also tormented Kotsukè himself.

After the lapse of another year his wife and children died, and the ghostly visitations did not cease until Kotsukè caused Sogoro to be canonised under the name of Sogo Daimiyo-jin, and erected a shrine in his honour. Soon after Kotsukè became mad, and in a quarrel killed another noble; but having regard to his state of mind he was finally pardoned, when he changed his name to Hida No Kami. (For full story of the ghost of Sakura, *vide* Mitford's "Tales.")

As in the drama of the Chushingura, the names of the chief characters are altered in the play of Sogoro.

As a theme of illustration, the story of Sogoro more properly comes under the heading of ghosts than under drama, as it is the tormenting of Kotsukè and his wife by the ghosts of his victims which we find depicted in prints—for example, in a triptych by Kuniyoshi. Ghost-stories are numerous in Japan, and Kuniyoshi has used them largely as subjects of illustration, particularly in a Tokaido and Kisokaido set, wherein the main theme is the portrayal of a scene from a ghost-story, sometimes connected with the place depicted.

In considering our second class of subject matter,

courtesans and geisha, it is necessary, in order to understand why the former were such a popular theme for illustration, to put behind us all preconceived ideas of what the term courtesan usually means.

The late Lord Redesdale (A. B. Mitford), in his "Tales," says, in a footnote on the courtesans of Yedo, that, in his opinion, in no country is the public courtesan more looked down upon and abhorred than in Japan. Doubtless he was speaking of the opinion of modern Japan, that is, since 1868; but such can hardly have been the attitude adopted towards the courtesan in the days when Japan was closed to the outside world. Considering that Kiyonaga and his great contemporaries—also Utamaro, Yeishi, and, in fact, all the foremost artists of Ukiyoye—lavished their highest skill upon her portrayal, she must have been a very different being to the moral-less creature of the streets of our large cities.

She was, on the contrary, a woman who had received the highest education, spoke a peculiar, old-fashioned language, and was remarkable for her intellectual refinement.

There were, of course, varying degrees of courtesans, and, as a rule, it was only those of the highest class, called "Oirans," that are represented in prints.

Her dress was of a splendour wholly different from the costume of the ordinary woman, and she was obliged to wear her *obi* (sash) tied in front, while all other women, including geisha (dancing and singing girls) tied theirs behind. She was further distinguished by an elaborate head-dress, consisting of a light frame upon which the coiffure was built up, and kept in place by a forest of light metal or wooden hairpins stuck round her head like the halo of a saint. The coiffure of other women was a much simpler affair.

Each Oiran had two young girls attendant on her, called "Kamuro," who, on reaching a certain age, were in turn promoted to the rank of Oiran. Sometimes an Oiran is represented with one or more attendants, in addition to her two Kamuro; these elder attendants were of the nature of maids-of-honour, called Shinzo, and ranked next to an Oiran.

The Yoshiwara, the name given to the courtesan quarter of Yedo, was founded in 1600 by the Shoji, Jinyemon, near his palace, and is so called from its

having been originally situated on a former rush-moor (yoshi-wara). After a great fire in 1657 it was moved to its present site on the north side of the city, not far from the great Asakusa temple, and enclosed by a wall. Entrance to it was gained by a single gate, which gave access to the main thoroughfare in which the tea-houses (or "green-houses," as they were called) were situated.

Judging from the number of artists who portrayed her, Hana-ogi of Ogi-ya (house of the fan) appears to have been a very popular beauty in her day; we find her represented in full-length or only head and shoulders. Other popular beauties were Chozan of Choyi-ya (house of the clove), and Yosoi of Matsuba-ya (house of the pine).

While courtesans and geisha were generally painted merely for the sake of their portraits, they are also represented engaged in all sorts of occupations, often in such as are only actually carried on by men or women peasants, such as the cultivation of silk-worms; also in the making of colour-prints, in processions of nobles with their banner-bearers and swordsmen, or as warriors. We also see them as the famous poets, in well-known scenes from legends

Portraits of two tea-house beauties, Hana-ogi and Taki-kawa of Ogi-ya; one of a series: *Seiro Mei kun Hana awase:* "A Series of Tea-house Beauties compared" (*Title in frame*).

Key: 1 Kiku, 2 gawa, 3 Yei, 4 zan, 5 *fudè* (with brush), 6 Kiwamè seal ('perfect'), 7 Date seal: Dragon 5 = 5th month, 1808, 8 Hana, 9 & 12 Ogi, 10 Taki, 11 Kawa, 13 ya, 14 uchi (house), 15 Publisher: Jzutsu-ya.

(Fine and early work in style of Utamaro).

and plays, or even as deities, such as the seven gods of good fortune, and as heroes.

Their appearance in landscape, where beautiful women are compared to beautiful scenery, has already been mentioned.

In our third category, landscape, Hokusai's and Hiroshige's work in this subject has been dealt with in the chapter devoted to those two artists.

A popular theme in landscape was that known as the *Hakkei*, or Eight Views, originally the subjects of Chinese poetry which were adapted to various picturesque scenes in Japan : to Lake Biwa in the province of Omi ; to the environs of Yedo ; and to Kanazawa in Yedo Bay. In either locality the themes for each view are the same, namely, snow, autumn moon, evening rain, vesper bells, boats returning home, geese flying to rest, sunset, and clearing weather after a storm.

Another favourite subject was that furnished by the six Tama rivers (Mutsu Tama-gawa), being six rivers of the same name in different provinces. As in the *Hakkei* series, each river had its own particular theme for illustration.

While the various stopping-places of the Tokaido were a fruitful source of illustration for artists besides Hiroshige, either as the main theme or merely as an adjunct to some other subject, those on the Kisokaido were not often depicted, probably because, being a mountainous and therefore more difficult and arduous route between Yedo and Kyoto, it was much less used than the easier coast road. The chief set of Kisokaido views is the combined series by Hiroshige and Yeisen. Views in and around Yedo, the capital, were also popular.

Under the heading of history, legends, and the like, we find scenes from the biography of Yoshitsune and his servant Benkei; various expeditions to Korea from that in the third century by the Empress Jingo to later, under different leaders, down to the sixteenth; and other historical (real and legendary) incidents. Of these latter is the legendary warrior Raiko (Minamoto no Yorimitsu), whose most famous exploit was the slaughter of the demon Shoten-doji in the tenth century.

Akin to these warriors are the Hundred and Eight Chinese Heroes; illustrations to the "Hundred

Poets," an anthology of poems collected in A.D. 1235 by Fujiwara-no-Sadaiye, himself one of the hundred, which range from A.D. 670 to the year of compilation.

In addition to the Hundred Poets there are also the Thirty-six Poets, and the still more select *Rok' kasen,* or Six Famous Poets (who also appear in the hundred) ; Kizen Hoshi, represented in priest's robes with a fan ; Ariwara no Nari-hira, with a sheaf of arrows at his back ; Sojo Henjo in priest's robes ; Otomo-Kuronushi in court dress ; Bunya-no-Yasuhidé, also in court robes ; and Ono-no-Komachi, the lady of the group, with a fan. Of these the last named appears to be the most popular, the seven incidents from her life being frequently the theme of illustration, often in parody or transferred to scenes in everyday life.

The seven incidents are as follows :

1. *Soshi arai Komachi :* " Komachi washing the book," in allusion to a poetical contest at the imperial palace, when a rival poet accused her of having stolen from an old book of poems the verse she recited as her own composition, and in support of his claim produced a copy with the verse in it. Komachi, however, was equal to the occasion, and,

calling for water, took the book and washed it, when the poem, being but freshly written, disappeared, leaving the original writing untouched. The accuser, thinking to get the better of Komachi, had hidden himself while she recited the poem to herself in her house, and had copied it into the book.

2. *Seki dera Komachi :* Komachi seated in a temple or seated on a mat.

3. *Kiyomidzu Komachi :* Komachi at the Kiyomidzu temple.

4. *Kayoi Komachi :* Komachi visiting.

5. *Ama koi Komachi :* Komachi praying for rain ; alluding to an incident when the country was suffering from a severe and prolonged drought, and the power of her magic alone broke the spell.

6. *Omu Komachi :* Parrot Komachi, so called because, when given a poem sent her by the Emperor, she repeated it with but one word altered.

7. *Sotoba Komachi :* Komachi (seated at) a grave post, in allusion to her penurious old age, when she was obliged to beg by the wayside.

Komachi is noted for her great beauty in her youth, followed by a most decrepit and penurious old age.

In romance we have the "Genji Monogatari," or Tales of Prince Genji, a collection of stories written by a Court lady, Murasaki Shikibu, in the 10th century, dealing with the adventures of Prince Genji; also the "Ise Monogatari" (Tales of Ise), tales of chivalry and romance, also dating from the tenth century. In these sometimes actual incidents are portrayed; at other times the title of the print and the subject of illustration appear to be entirely unconnected.

For example, the writer has in his collection a print by Utamaro II., the title of which reads, "Seven designs for Genji pictures compared," the seven designs being really a series of seven portraits of Yoshiwara beauties, while the reference to Prince Genji is left to the imagination. Perhaps the allusion may be to his numerous lady-loves.

In deities there are the Seven Gods of Good Fortune, who are always treated humorously. Their names are: Fukuro-kuju, the god of wisdom and longevity, identified by his abnormal forehead; Juro-jin, the patron of learning; Dai-koku, represented with a mallet and rice-bags, the god of riches; Hotei, who carries a large sack, corresponds

to our Friar Tuck ; Yebisu, with a large fish, provides the daily food ; Bishamon, a warrior in armour, the god of war ; and Benten, the lady of the party, the goddess of fertility and music. These seven are supposed to sail into every port in their ship on New Year's Eve, bearing the *takaramono*, or treasures.

Other deities portrayed are Kwanon, the female Buddha, and Shoki, the demon-queller.

Somewhat akin to the foregoing is Kintaro (or Kintoki), the child of the forest, and his wild foster-mother, Yama-uba. Kintaro is the boy Hercules of Japanese mythology, and is represented in various feats of strength, uprooting a forest tree, struggling with a large carp under water, fighting a bear and an eagle at the same time, and so forth. Kintaro is known as the golden boy, though on prints he always appears a crimson red. He is often depicted by Kiyonaga, Utamaro, and Kuniyoshi.

Kuniyoshi has left a very fine set of ten prints entitled *Koso go Ichidai Ryaku zu* ("An Abridged Biography of Koso illustrated"), Koso being another name for the priest Nichiren, who founded a sect of Buddhists named after him in the thirteenth century A.D. These prints, which are very rare

Nichiren attacked by Yamabushi, who hurls a great rock at him.

Key: 1 Ichi 2 yu 3 sai 4 Kuni 5 yoshi 6 *gwa* (drew)]

Face p. 110.]

and are numbered amongst Kuniyoshi's best work, depict various scenes from the life of Nichiren. The best print of the set is that showing Nichiren on a pilgrimage in the mountains of Tsuku-hara, in a heavy snowstorm. An excellent full-page reproduction in colour of this plate appears in Joly's "Legend in Japanese Art," and it is also reproduced in monochrome in von Seidlitz's "History of Japanese Colour-Prints." Two other scenes from his life are here given (Plates 16 and 32): Nichiren quelling a storm raised by the demon Daimoku (*vide* p. 66), while on a voyage to the island of Sado, whither he had been exiled, by casting his spell over it; and Nichiren keeping a great rock suspended in the air, which had been hurled at him by Yamabushi to crush him, by merely gazing at it.

The story of Sogoro as a theme of illustration has already been mentioned. Another favourite story is that of the lovers Gompachi and Komurasaki, which is also the subject of a play, and which is found alluded to in prints (*e.g.*, by Utamaro). The story is set forth in full in Mitford's "Tales."

They first meet at what Gompachi supposes to be

an inn, but which is in reality the abode of robbers, who had kidnapped Komurasaki. She warns Gompachi of his danger, and they manage to escape at night, when the girl is restored to her parents. Later, misfortune overtaking her parents, Komurasaki sells herself to the Yoshiwara to pay their debts. Gompachi here meets her for the second time, and determines to redeem her, but the methods he adopts to obtain this end, killing and robbing people of their money, finally land him in the hands of the public executioner. A few days after his death, Komurasaki breaks out from her prison in the Yoshiwara and commits self-immolation at his grave.

Besides these two, we find several other pairs of lovers represented in prints, among them being O Chiyo and Hambei, and Umegawa and Chiubei; while Yeizan has left a set of twelve prints, each representing a pair of lovers famous in story and legend.

Many other Japanese stories and legends are found illustrated in books, but here we are considering only single prints.

Surimono, being more of the nature of New Year and greeting cards, fall into a class by themselves.

The seven gods of good fortune already alluded to above being particularly associated with the New Year, naturally often appear on surimono, either as a group or individually ; also the heroes of the Han (Chinese) Dynasty ; animals representing the various cycles of years ; flowers and birds. In fact, the designs found on surimono are almost endless in their variety.

Surimono were also used to notify a birth or marriage, or issued as invitation cards. Artists, too, when about to adopt a new name, sent them to their patrons notifying the change.

The Five Festivals (*Go-Sekku*) representing the five chief festivals throughout the year, are found both as surimono and in full-sized prints. These are as follows : (i.) the first day of the first month (Shogatsu), that is, New Year's Day, when people wrote congratulatory poems to one another ; (ii.) the third day of the third month, the girls' doll festival (Yayoi) ; (iii.) the fifth day of the fifth month, the boys' festival (Tango), which is to a Japanese boy what a birthday is to a European boy ; (iv.) the seventh day of the seventh month (Tanabata), the weavers' festival (for the origin and

meaning of this festival, which requires to be explained at length for its understanding, *vide* Joly's "Legend in Japanese Art"); (v.) the ninth day of the ninth month, chrysanthemum festival (Choyo).

From festivals one naturally passes to games, some of which formed subjects for print designers.

In concluding this essay on the art of the Japanese colour-print designer, it only remains to record that of no other nation can it be said that its purely artisan class evolved and perfected a pictorial art which, artistically or technically, has never been equalled.

CHAPTER VIII

JAPANESE CHRONOLOGY AS APPLIED TO THE DATING OF PRINTS

As the dating of prints has been emphasised in the foregoing chapters, it will not be out of place to say a few words on Japanese Chronology.

Their longest unit of time is a cycle of sixty years, which is sub-divided into shorter cycles of twelve years, to each of which is assigned the name of an animal in regular sequence, similar to our twelve signs of the zodiac.

In addition to these regular divisions, there are also various periods (*Mengo*) which date from some particular event, such as a great earthquake, an epidemic, or other visitation, and are purely arbitrary in length, a change being often made because of ill-luck, which accounts for their frequency previous to the Meiji ("enlightened") period, which dates from the year 1868—when restrictions against intercourse with the outer world were

removed—down to the death of the late Emperor in 1911, the present period, Taisho, commencing in 1912. The Meiji period, therefore, was a comparatively long one, and in marked contrast to the Manyen and Genji periods, which only lasted one year each, for 1860 and 1864, or the Kiowa period of two years, 1802-3.

The same animals which denote the years are also assigned to the twelve months of the year and to the hours of the day, which is divided into twelve periods of two hours each.

In the date-seal on a print, however, the month is denoted by a number, the year itself by one of the twelve animals. Sometimes a cypher for the particular period within which the year falls is also added, which enables us to fix the exact date, unless the period is over twelve years in extent, in which case some of the animals will be repeated. Between the years 1764 and 1868, however—the period covered by this volume—only two periods, Kwansei (1789-1801) and Tempo (1830-1843) lasted more than twelve years. Thus Tiger year, Tempo period, may be either the equivalent of 1830 or 1842; to decide which we must refer to other evidence, if it

can be found, such as the years within which the artist worked, the style and quality of the print, and so forth.

For example, the bird series by Sugakudo (Plate 18) is seal-dated Sheep year, without any indication of the period, and may be either 1847 (Kokwa period), or 1859 (Ansei period). The high quality of the work and good colouring would suggest the earlier of the two dates as the more likely one, as aniline dyes were coming into use about 1860, while their own native colours had deteriorated by this date, as is proved by the later prints of Hiroshige.

When the activity of an artist extended over a long period, as was the case with Hokusai, the exact dating of a print becomes almost impossible, apart from other evidence, when only the year is indicated. Thus the first act of the well-known large Chushingura set by Hokusai, published by Senichi, is seal-dated for the Tiger year which fell in the years 1806, 1818, and 1830. These three years occurred in the Bunkwa, Bunsei, and Tempo periods respectively.

Reference has been made to Mr. Happer's investigations of the date-seals found on prints, more

particularly on the various upright series by Hiroshige.

In one respect, however, he has fallen into an error over the seal for the Ansei period, due probably to its similarity to another seal with a totally different meaning, which occurs on the prints comprising the "Hundred Views of Yedo" series issued during this period. For comparison, these seals and their corresponding cyphers are reproduced on an enlarged scale at the end of this chapter.

He makes this error in the transcription of date-seals on the illustrations to his book, "The Heritage of Hiroshige" (S. Francisco, 1908), and also in an appendix thereto containing this and other cypher marks.

The seal in question occurs in Plates 4, 5, and 26 in this volume, and is indicated by the key-number 1 in each case. This is not the *seal* for the Ansei period, as Mr. Happer states (which does not, in fact, occur on prints), but is an inspector's seal, and reads "aratamè," meaning "examined," and must not be confused with another small circular seal which was affixed by the publisher of the print (*vide* reproduction at end of chapter).

This latter seal occurs on Plate 8 (key-number 4), and on other prints here illustrated. It was originally intended as a kind of hall-mark, and reads "kiwamè," meaning "perfect," and was affixed by the publisher himself to prints only of a certain merit. It has no connection with the censor; but as the art of the colour-printer fell into decay towards the middle of the last century, it became customary to put it on every print issued, so that it eventually lost its significance as the mark of a good print.

Two prints in the writer's collection prove conclusively Mr. Happer's error (one of them being here illustrated at Plate 26), as his so-called "Ansei" seal occurs on them in conjunction with a date-seal *outside* the Ansei period. Below the "aratamè" seal is the date-seal, which reads "Tempo Tiger 7," that is, seventh month, Tiger year, in the Tempo period = 1842, or twelve years before the first year of Ansei.

The other example is a print from the "Sixty-odd Provinces" series, and is dated Ox 12 = 12th month, Ox year (1853), the last year of the Kayei period. In this case the "aratamè" seal takes the

place of the two small inspector's seals with which this particular series is generally marked in lieu of it. (*See* Plate 27.)

"Aratamè" may also be translated "changing to," as when an artist is on the point of adopting another name and signs himself (for example) "Kunisada aratamè ni sei Toyokuni" (Kunisada changing to the second Toyokuni).

The Handbook to the Print Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, gives a table of all the Japanese periods from the year 1688 down to the present day, with the equivalent years A.D., and will be found useful in identifying the dates on prints.

The twelve animals marking the years and months are: Rat (1), Ox (2), Tiger (3), Hare or Rabbit (4), Dragon (5), Snake (6), Horse (7), Sheep or Goat (8), Monkey (9), Cock (10), Dog (11), and Boar (12), the numbers in brackets being the years in the sixty-year cycle, which begins with the Rat, this order being repeated five times through each cycle.

When they represent months the order begins

with Tiger for January; and as the hours of the day, with the Ox (1 a.m. to 3 a.m.), round to the Rat (11 p.m. to 1 a.m.).

Sei seal.
(Abbrev. of Ansei)

'Aratamè' seal.
("Examined")

'Kiwamè' seal.
("Perfect")

政

In cypher.

改

In cypher.

極

In cypher.

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